

THE ART OF
TAKING A WIFE

THE ART OF
TAKING A WIFE
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GAY AND BIRD
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TO THE IMPATIENT,
WHO WISH TO MARRY TOO SOON ;
TO THE LIBERTINES,
WHO TAKE A WIFE TOO LATE ;
TO THE TIMID
WHO, WAVERING BETWEEN YES AND NO,
END BY NOT TAKING ONE AT ALL,

This Book is Dedicated

BY A MAN
WHO HAS ALWAYS BLESSED HIS FIRST MARRIAGE,
AND HOPES TO BLESS THE SECOND ;
BELIEVING THIS SEXUAL CONTRACT TO BE
THE LEAST EVIL ONE
OF THE TIES WHICH BIND THE
MAN TO THE WOMAN,
IN SPITE
OF ITS MANY DEFECTS AND DANGERS.

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PROLOGUE.

BETWEEN SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS.—TO
TAKE, OR NOT TO TAKE A WIFE ?

FOR the majority of men, and for at least thirty years of their lives, love is the strongest necessity, and governs them like a tyrant with no other curb than the wretched brake of written codes, which they do not read, and of social conventionalities, which they can easily silence by employing hypocrisy's mask ; an hypocrisy, let it be well understood, well dressed, well curled, and well educated.

How can one satisfy this greatest of all human needs ?

*By buying love, at so much an hour,
so much a month, or so much a year.*

By gaining it by seduction or violence.

By taking a wife.

It would seem as if these three ways of loving were totally distinct, one from the other ; in fact, that any one would exclude the others, and that they would stand in direct opposition to each other. But when hypocrisy is at the helm of the vessel which bears us over the great sea of life, it contrives so ably and so cleverly, as to enable us to enjoy all three methods at one moment, and, while we are sailing between rocks free of danger or shipwreck, it affords us, as it were, all the delights of a voyage in a beautiful archipelago, where islands and

islets seem to meet and touch each other ; and where land, mountains, and scenery all form a bright, picturesque, and beautiful picture.

We row upon the tranquil waters of matrimony, and yet glide so near to the shores of venal love that we can grasp the flowers and gather the shells and precious pearls which lie there. We sail with the wind over the more tempestuous sea of seduction, but all the while we coast the island of poetic, faithful, and constant love ; thus, vice, adultery, and domestic peace, debauchery and eternal vows, angels and beasts, find themselves guests at the same table, without false modesty, and without remorse.

Civilisation has opened three ways of loving to men of the present day,

and one would have thought that since they are free to choose one, they would have been satisfied with that. Not at all. Civilised man is by nature insatiable, for the hammer of the *excelsior* beats ever at his heart, the thirst for something better wears him away, and the hunger for *something more* consumes him; hence he has set himself to destroy the boundaries and walls which separate the three roads, so that he can easily take short cuts from one to the other without risk; and so matrimony, prostitution, and adultery walk hand in hand; and if in public they appear very cool to each other, that is only a blind, for in the secrecy of their houses they wink at each other, sup and sleep

together. If all this is indeed so, a Turk would say it is so because it must be. If all this can indeed be, an epicurean optimist would say, let us, too, try and sail in this sea, now so calm, and now so tempestuous, and let us set that sanctified hypocrisy at the helm.

However, I am neither Turk nor cynic, and I still believe in moral progress, and in the efficacy of books and the spoken word; and even though I be left alone in the belief that there is no happiness save in the good, nor cheerfulness save in sincerity, and in being the same inwardly as outwardly, I would still die in this conviction.

I like a mixture of things at table, but I have no heart for it in the

field of morality. I wish to see the family on one side, and the brothel on the other; and when two natures living together have become an intolerable torment to each other, I should wish the law to apply the instrument of divorce to their chains and to set them free.

The three ways of loving should be separate one from the other, and should never be united. So far from breaking down the walls that divide them, I wish to have them so high as to become impregnable fortresses.

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Only one of these three ways, however, is that which the honest and happy ought to take. That of seduction and violence, only thieves,

assassins, and villains can enter. The third, unfortunately, the way of venal love, nearly all enter, though still desiring and invoking some distant ideal, where this way shall be closed, and no path left free save that of matrimony, though its dignity must be always guaranteed by the law of divorce.

But is marriage always possible and always easy?

No ; it is often impossible, and always difficult.

And the honest man stops and meditates upon it as upon the gravest, the most intricate, and most obscure problem of life. The misfortune is this, that just these timid and thoughtful men are the best, and the fear is sometimes so great,

and the meditation lasts so long, that old age comes upon them before they have resolved the problem or made themselves a family nest. Instead of this, the improvident, the thoughtless, and villains precipitate themselves headforemost along the road of matrimony; and if for a few moments they struggle in the tortures of doubt, they quickly silence apprehension and remorse by saying to themselves :

“If it should turn out badly, if I find nettles and thorns on this road, I will clear another cross-road with one good stroke of my spade, and will buy love like so many others, and will, like them, seek it either in the house of my friend or neighbor. Immorality on this point is

so lax, the indulgence of the public is so merciful, that I may enjoy this violation of home without falling under the penalty of the law. Mahomet also, generally so severe on all transgressions of the written law, when he speaks of the sins of love, even of the greatest, always adds: '*But God is good and merciful.*' And all think with Mahomet, though they have not written the Koran, that to the sins of love '*God is good and merciful.*'"

I, however, the warmest advocate of marriage for myself and others, desire with all my soul that the honest and wise man should marry, to increase the capital of honesty and wisdom in future generations. And so I preach and shall preach to my last breath:

Marry! Marriage is still and always will be the most honest, healthy, and ideal mode of loving.

But I add immediately:

Marry well; combine all the powers of your thought and feeling to solve this most important problem of your life; add to them all that is best in yourself; all that you find of the best among your counsellors who are your friends.

And then follow the advice given us by that embodiment of good sense, Benjamin Franklin: Take a sheet of paper, and after having folded it in two, so as to have two distinct columns, write on one side all the advantages the proposed marriage would bring you, and on the other all the evils and dangers into which

it might lead you. When you have finished this piece of analysis work, try to measure the opposing elements, cancelling alternately those that seem to balance each other, as in algebra $+ 3$ and $- 3$ is equal to zero, and you will see what is left upon the page—that is, whether the good predominates, or whether the evil has the upper hand.

I know well all the mistakes you may make. I know, too, that if you love you will write in rose-coloured ink in the column of good, and in that of evil you will use the blackest. But in any case this work of analysis, this labour of detailed examination will, without your being aware of it, oblige you to consider many elements which otherwise you would

have passed over, just as if you had had recourse to a microscope of great power instead of to your eyes.

Matrimony must be studied with the eyes first; with the microscope after; yes, even with the telescope. The eyes will enable us to see the principal part of the problem; the microscope will show all the ins and outs of our love; it will reveal all its cells and all its fibres; and lastly, the telescope will give us the power of seeing, prophetically, as it were, what will befall our passion and desire in the evolution of time.

Then, if, after using eyes, microscope, and telescope, you also read my book, you will find there the sincere and dispassionate words of a man who became a physician that

he might study mankind better ; who began by studying himself, as being the subject ever at hand ; who to this daily incessant study has devoted *forty-six* large volumes not yet printed.

Listen to the voice of a man who has made woman his principal study, judging her to be the better part of humanity, and has loved her more than all the creatures upon earth, believing her to be the first and greatest source of happiness. I know perfectly that, even after having applied Franklin's method to the study of the problem of matrimony, even after having used eyes, microscope, and telescope, and read my book, you may yet make a mistake ; but your conscience will always be

free from any remorse, in knowing that, as far as you were able, you did all that was possible to secure happiness.

Vessels are sometimes wrecked under the command of able and brave captains, and under the guidance of a sure compass. But for one of these you find a hundred wrecks, to which there was no compass, or an ignorant or drunken captain.

And all those who marry without reflecting deeply and long on the abstruse problem are drunk and ignorant captains, who launch, without a compass, upon the most tempestuous sea.

THE ART OF TAKING A WIFE.

CHAPTER I.

MARRIAGE IN MODERN SOCIETY.

OF all paradoxes man is the cleverest and most untiring. He says he is a worm of the earth, but believes himself to be a son of God; his own person he clothes modestly, but revels in discovering the nakedness of the greatest possible number of his sisters in Christ. The more he humiliates himself, the prouder he is; the more he vaunts

his generosity, so much the more is he egotistical ; an adorer of liberty in theory, but in practice a daily contriver of tyrannies.

For the present I will confine myself to this last form of his madness. If one only listens to him, he places liberty above all the good things of the world. If Adam has lost the earthly paradise, it is because he did not know how to tolerate the yoke of a divine prohibition ; if man has spattered his planet with blood, it is because he preferred the hard bread of the free citizen to the golden chains of despotism ; if he has raised monuments to Spartacus, Bahilla, Garibaldi, and Washington, it is because his first glory is to be free ; but the monuments for-

gotten, the tyrants killed, he raises new ones on his own account; perhaps for the pleasure of destroying them hereafter. If he does not seek some innocent and pleasant occupation, what can he do after having slept and loved and eaten?

Numbers must take the first place among the early tyrants of our own making.

When God made the world, he entirely forgot to make numbers, and we have corrected this fault of creation by making them ourselves. God had not numbered the stars in heaven, or the drops of water in the sea, the leaves on the trees or the ants on the ground. Infinity above, infinity below, the ineffable and immeasurable everywhere.

Instead, we have repaired this great forgetfulness of the Creator, by placing numbers above everything else, and making them our masters in the world of living things and dead; we allow them to tyrannize over us in every act of our humble daily life, as well as in the pages of history and in dogmas of philosophy. If there have been sanguinary revolutions in order to obtain the liberty of the press, why as yet has no one rebelled against the tyranny of numbers?

Quien sabe?

Whoever would think of buying eleven or thirteen eggs?

No one, for 10 and 12 are our small tyrants.

Who would make a present of nine or ninety-nine francs to his own son?

No one, for 10 is a great tyrant, and 100 greater than 10.

Who has never felt the yoke of numbers one thousand and one hundred thousand? who is never in subjection to the tyranny of the million, both in language and mode of life?

And centuries, too, which are only so many figures, what a number of theories they have evoked from the depths of history; how many false names have they not written in the anagraphs of time; how many revolutions have they not postponed; how many others have they aroused, merely on account of the tyranny of a number?

For some years we have had before our eyes one of the most deplorably humiliating examples of our view of

this arithmetical incubus, the decline of the nineteenth century to make room for the twentieth.

Six years are still wanting till this numerical cataclysm. Who knows how many books will be written on the century dying out, how many prophecies on the century following it; what torrents of philosophy and ink to discuss the passing of the number 19 to that of 20?

Yet centuries only exist on paper, and after having made them ourselves, we adore and freely elect them to be our tyrants; only to deride the poor savages who, like us, make their own gods of wood and stone, fall on their knees before them and fear them.

And we fear numbers—only another idol of thought, made for our use

and necessity, and in the similitude of our wretchedness and intellectual weakness.

For my part I only see around me an infinite continuity of things and of time, nor do I allow myself to be overawed by the cabal of numbers, with which we ought to amuse ourselves as with a pack of cards, esteeming them for what they are worth ; a poor example of a thing yet poorer !

The *dying century*, *fin de siècle*, and all such sensational phrases, which are intended to express a great deal, because they mean nothing—these exclamations, the eloquence of the non-eloquent, move me little, if at all. I look back and see *a yesterday* ; I look around and see *a to-day* ; forward and I see *a to-morrow* ; the three tenses

of the *to become*, which have no numbers, nor will ever have. For they succeed each other unceasingly, following the mighty strides of our journey, not with the figures of a century, but with a *regret* that becomes a *hope*, and will be a *faith*; to be succeeded again and forever by *regret*, *hope*, and *faith*—unceasingly.

I wished to write this in the first pages of my book to let you know that if I attempt to delineate marriage in modern society I renounce *the dying century*, the *fin de siècle*, and all such effective phrases, which would give me, based on numbers, so many resources of rhetoric and sentimentality. I have hated and always shall hate all forms of tyranny, including that of numbers. I look around and

say, this is the way men marry *to-day*. They do so because they are sons of a *yesterday*, which is the father of to-day; then I look forward and hope that to-morrow will be better than yesterday or to-day, and I endeavour to promote the good as quickly as possible and with a minimum of pain, by my pen, my experience, and my studies, *cito tute et jucunde*, as Celsus has it.

In our civilized society, marriage is *the least evil* of all the different modes of union between man and woman for the preservation of the race. It is the result of many historic evolutions, many sensual, moral, religious, and legislative elements, which have come into conflict with each other in the course of time.

Remote atavism of the ravishment of the female, holy words of inspired prophets, imperiousness of feudatories, avarice of usurers, transports of love and heroism of hearts, have all left something of their own upon the altar of matrimony. But before the sacrament was finished and the priest sent up the fumes of his incense, animal man came leering and saying :

“ This is my affair. I am the sole and true priest of this rite. I am the only minister of this religion.” And mixing the divine and human vows on the altar with his hairy hands—perhaps, too, with his tail—he formed a chaos of things most opposite, from the highest to the lowest, from the most sublime to the most ignoble. And this, then, is marriage.

To curse this love sanctified by vows is useless, to suppress it is impossible, to substitute something better is absurd (at least for the present), and nothing remains but to accept it as the least evil of sexual unions, and to ameliorate it gradually, prudently, and wisely.

By free choice on both sides, enlightened by reason.

By the guarantee of divorce.

Neither the prince nor the proletariat needs this book of mine. The first marries worse than any citizen in his kingdom, for dynastic reasons, without love or sympathy. With him it is first the throne, then the family; first the alliance of his colours, and then

if there is room, the kisses of love. It is true he may console himself with the vulgar and easily won embraces of a pandering Venus ; he may also take advantage of one of the most ridiculous remnants of the Middle Ages, the morganatic marriage. In all cases the ministers, deputies, nay, even journalists provide him with a wife. The art of taking a wife is for him, therefore, *nonsense*.

The proletariat, more fortunate than the prince, may choose the woman it loves, and in its choice may take advantage of the counsels of those who have loved and sinned much. But it does not read books, for they cost too much ; and when by law its individuality is cancelled from the statistics of the illiterate, it has no

time to read, for the tyranny of bread oppresses it.

Therefore I write for neither prince nor proletariat, but for all that human multitude who live and move between the extreme poles of modern society and who constitute the true nerve of the nation.

In what way do all these millions of males and females combine?

In different ways, but amongst them marriage is the only legal foundation of the family permitted by morality and approved by religion. All others are contraband, moving on cross-roads either alone or in company, but all, in one way or the other, defrauding nature, with an eternal envy for those who have honestly paid custom dues on entering the city.

Without fear of going far wrong, one may say that in whatever society there are the greatest number of married people, there one will find more morality and decorum, and consequently the number of those who love and nourish their love by seduction, whether it be with the armed hand on the public road, or clandestinely under the form of domestic robbery, will be less.

Besides this, our modern society is suffering from *gold fever*; a disease which is as old as man himself and has taken the form and course of a real epidemic; this contributes more than any other element to corrupt the roots of marriage.

Diffused instruction and the many social exigencies have increased our

needs beyond measure; more especially those which are more costly, that is, those of the intellect and the higher æsthetic emotions, without in any way enlarging the sources of production.

From birth to death, the balance of home life oppresses us, torments us; its arithmetic pierces through the skin with the acute points of its figures, reaches our very viscera and, alas, our hearts also; poisoning every pleasure, spoiling all the holy and happy poetry of life. Invited as all are to the genial table of modern civilization which offers us so many new delights, we are like the poor government official, who, for appearance's sake, allows himself to be carried off to a ball, and between the

bars of music and the full glasses, feels his pocket anxiously, wondering how and when he will be able to pay the score.

With what difficulty some of the money is drawn from the poor purse of a middle-class man! How many pangs has it not caused before it sees the light of day, accompanied by the last caress of the convulsive fingers! How unequal the comparison between those who live on an income of one thousand and three thousand francs! And, from the ever increasing fever of desires, the gnawing of all vanities, and the vanity of the classes, how these figures increase daily until they reach to ten, twenty, or thirty thousand francs!

And this is the reason that whilst

love alone should prompt to marriage, it is nearly always the last party in the contract, in which money judges and directs according to the need of it, with all the imperiousness of one who knows himself to be unconquerable.

Money, money, always money! It is the first and supreme arbiter of the greater number of marriages.

To take a wife means to become poor, if the wife does not help to build the new family nest; it means to walk with open eyes into a bottomless and dark abyss; it signifies condemning one's self to the daily torture of poverty, and to dedicate the children yet unborn to the same struggle.

Our dignity would demand that the

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wife's dowry should not enter into our choice at all. The true ideal would be the ability to offer to our companion riches, or, at least, a competency with our heart and hand, so that we could say :

“ See, beloved ; all that is mine is thine. However much I give you, I shall always be your debtor, for you have given me your love.” All this is noble and grand, and every man who is conscious of the power of his own moral and physical manhood would wish to say so. But how many really can ?

Exceedingly few ; hardly any.

And then the young man who would seek to love in the way of the Lord is discouraged and renounces marriage, in which he only sees the

door to misery or cowardice. He renounces it frankly and forever. Are celibates more honest, and how far does their honesty extend?

With the most honest, virtue extends to an unwillingness to betray the purity of the maiden, or the faithfulness of other men's wives; extends or rather descends, to making the service of love a question of periodical hygiene *regulated* by the rubric of the calendar and by that most imperative one of the lunar month. Poor love, poor translation of the most epic poem of life! It is as though one were to translate Homer into some Australian dialect!

These bachelor hygienists are however a small minority. Others pretend to something more and

better, and make love in the houses of others, and live by abject and cowardly seduction, and perhaps usury.

This is the most sordid and cancerous sore in our modern marriage ; this is the gangrene of our society, which spreads an asphyxiating fetor of domestic treachery, of moral infection, which contaminates and infests everything. Woe to us if in every family the newly born could proclaim aloud the name of their father ! How many false, living bills of exchange would be protested, what long faces amongst biologists who ingeniously study the law of heredity ; what a terrible picture of treachery and dissembling ! human and civilized society would appear

all at once like a band of false coiners, and the woman's womb nothing but a mint of false money.

But the newly born can only weep—the first salutation to life—and the wombs of women are silent, and continue their business of false coinage.

And yet I do not blame the woman more than the man, in this galley of treachery, this wide-spread and clandestine manufactory of bastards. If man assails the woman, and plots against her virtue, he avails himself of the rights of life. If society does not permit him to take a *wife*, why should he not share the bread of him who has too much to eat? Do not the workmen of Europe declare daily, that one of the first rights is that of work? And

is not the right of loving perhaps more sacred; the work of works; that for which nature sacrifices the individual, and to which it consecrates the best of its energies? Husbands defend these rights, we attack them. If they are conquered — *tant pis pour eux!*

And the poor wives, why should they not brighten the ennui of the nuptial bed with some little love affair? Were they not bound forever to a man they had never loved, whom they had perhaps seen only once? Were they not sold by their parents, guardians, and matrons, like merchandise? Was not their dowry rated at the weight of a coat of arms? and have not they also the right to love? And all the others

who have had the good fortune to love the man who has given them his name, and have thrown themselves into his arms, giving him their whole hearts, happy to be able to transform themselves in him and for him; who dreamt of making marriage a synonym of love, and who instead found the husband in a few months in the arms of an old love; have not all these women the right of vengeance? This is matrimony as it is daily represented in the many small theaters which we call men's houses.

In these theaters, however (one must be just and not exaggerate), there are more farces played than comedies, more comedies than dramas. Tragedies are rare. For

this high form of dramatic art heroes are required, and they are very scarce in modern society, We have made our houses, statues, pictures, and gardens smaller, and have been compelled to reduce our feelings also.

The pistol and dagger, too, figure in the chronicles of matrimony, but as phenomena. In the home-theater, on the contrary, the punishment of retaliation, the little basenesses, the stirring of conscience, under all forms and at all sorts of prices, are in common use. The *ménages à trois* (aye, even four) are pretty pictures in kind; and the hypocrisy of husbands who will not see, because they detest scenes, figure every day in the running account of modern matrimony.

Live and let live—to apply the noble modern institution of co-operative societies to the family; and raise aloft the banner of the association of forces. One for all, and all for one!

Infidelity and treachery are not the only moths which corrode marriage. We have all the domestic discords which spring from the inequality of the needs of intelligence, heart, and habits of thought; we have the partisans of the wife and those of the husband, who quarrel amongst themselves, complicating the problem, poisoning the wounds, opening with every touch the cicatrices which time and love were so pitifully healing.

If war is an exception in matri-

mony, peace is still more rare; and one may safely say that in the greater number of cases it is an armed peace, an atmosphere which relaxes the strength, dries up the purest sources of tenderness, and destroys its happiness. In a word, as our society is constituted in the present day, hell is not common in the family circle, paradise exceedingly rare, but purgatory is almost universal.

And yet marriage is still the *least evil* amongst the unions of the man and woman; it can and ought to grow continually better and increase human happiness; which is for me the highest and truest end of progress.

What is the use of being able to run through space at the velocity of seventy kilometres an hour, or to go

round the world in seventy days; what the use of being able to talk through the telephone or see the clouds in the sky of Mars; what the use of so great a fecundity of books, of such a deluge of journals, if one is unable to increase the patrimony of human happiness by even a farthing?

At the present day marriage *may* be happy, just as one *may* become rich by playing in the lottery, but whilst one door opens to the possibility of good, two open to that of evil. He who utters the fatal *yes* before the Syndic girded with the three national colors, lets a grain fall in the scale that holds our happiness and two in the scale that holds our misfortunes. It is his duty to do the opposite; it is the duty of society to defend matri-

mony from the perils which threaten it, by wise laws not inspired by the arcadian tendency of the heart, nor by theocratical mysticism, but by a profound knowledge of man.

* * *

About twenty years ago I broke a lance in favour of divorce in my "*Fisiologia dell' amore*," and hoped at that time to have seen it by now included in the laws of my country.

Twenty years ago I wrote:

"Divorce ought to be included among our laws as soon as possible: happy couples solicit it to secure their dignity, wounded by a tyrannical tie; the unhappy implore it on their bended knees, those who by misfortune or fault are condemned

to the most supreme of human tortures: that of a slavery without redemption, of a yoke without rest, of a scourge without balm, of a grief without hope."* Even to-day divorce is not made a law among us, but public opinion demands and will have it. No one in the present day dare defend it with the broken arms of the Church; but many defend it still in the name of the children and of the sanctity of the family.

There are too many innocent victims of matrimony for their voices not to be heard; and when the law-giver knows how to surround divorce with all the most delicate guarantees, he will increase the sanctity of the family and free the children from

* "*Fisiologia dell' amore*," Milano, 1873, p. 338.

the cruelly abject spectacle of their two parents living under the same roof hating each other, with homicide in their thoughts, bearing the chains of convicts, without the courage or the strength to break them.

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Legislators must do this, the rest of the duty lies with those directors of the mind who are called writers, masters, and educators. They ought to teach the woman to know what love is, and what matrimony is, so that she should not give herself, bound hand and foot, to a contract which she knows by hearsay only, nor enter the dim future guided by paternal, maternal, or religious authority alone.

The possibilities of misfortune are a hundred times greater for the woman than for the man, for she is always more ignorant of things genital than we are, and goes to the altar or municipality ignorant of all, dragged like a lamb to the slaughter-house.

At the present day, under the customs to which our society conforms, the only profession of woman is that of wife and mother; and to this calling she is instructed from infancy, not to be an exemplary wife or perfect mother, but, if possible, to find a husband, and that an ideal one, one who is handsome, young, and above all rich. She is secretly and cleverly instructed in the art of hunting that rare game, a good husband; not in

order to make him or herself happy, but to increase her income and to rise a step or two in the social scale. If, in comfortable circumstances, she must become rich; if rich, a millionaire; if civilian, a countess; if countess, marchioness or princess. This is what she is to aim at; all her education has been directed to this end. Now, marriage should rise from its lower position of a business transaction to the higher one of a union of hearts and thoughts, and neither of the two companions ought to be able to look at each other with anger and think:

You bought me.

I sold myself.

Nothing can cleanse us from this original sin, which contaminates mat-

rimony. In vain do the comforts of riches, the pride of a high position, the excitements of domestic sensuality, throw flowers over the wound to hide it. At the least quibble, the least cloud that covers the heaven of the double life, one hears the fatal words:

You bought me,

I sold myself,

arising from the depths of the troubled conscience like a voice evoked by some evil spirit.

And when neither riches, sensuality, nor vanity have a rag wherewith to cover the cancerous sore, the naked and dreadful spectre of an unsuccessful speculation, of unsuccessful business—then bitterness is added to

bitterness, and the domestic warfare which has become permanent, angry, and poisonous, developes into a chronic despair, the most heart-rending form of human pain. Even this is not all; as in an attack of neuralgia the deep-seated and continual pains become sharper and more intolerable at certain moments, taking on a piercing and stab-like character, so it is with the deep-seated and dumb despair of those two unfortunate beings. Every now and then the inexorable cry sounds, and thus it goes on until the last breath.

Let divorce come then, and quickly, to set all these slaves free; let there be a wiser and more liberal education, to teach girls what they do not

know or know indifferently ; so that they, like ourselves, can freely say their *yes* before the altar or the magistrate with perfect knowledge and understanding.

CHAPTER II.

SEXUAL CHOICE IN MARRIAGE.—THE ART OF CHOOSING WELL.

THERE are two principal ways by which we may arrive at the fatal *yes*, that terrible monosyllable which must decide our happiness or misfortune ; that *yes* which may make for us a paradise on earth, or a hell of twenty-four hours for every day in the 365.

Either love first and marriage after, or marriage first and love after. Which of these two ways is the better, and the most certain to lead us to the paradise of two ?

Theoretically, the answer cannot be

doubted ; one ought to love first and marry after.

In practice, however, it is not always so. Many marriages inspired by love end badly, while others, planned by reason more than the heart, turn out well.

And why? If the theory is true, it ought to accord with the practice, and if it contradicts the practice the theory must be mistaken.

The apparent contradiction can be explained at once if we reflect that love is every day spoken of as the desire for the possession of the woman, and this alone is certainly not sufficient to make two people happy. Give love and lust their real names and every difficulty immediately disappears, and we then see the happy dogma,

Love first and marriage after, shine out in all its splendour. If by legal means alone a man can possess the woman he loves and if the passion be violent, the greatest libertine, and even the enemy of matrimony, bow their heads under the *Furcæ Caudinæ* of female virtue and the civil code, and marry. It is a stony road and full of pitfalls, but one which, nevertheless, may sometimes lead to the happiness of the two. Gradually there becomes associated with the desire of the senses, that more valuable sense of the affinity of hearts, and when the desire is satisfied there remains still the enjoyment of the more delicate dainties of the understanding and affection. To transform lust into love is a difficult work, but worthy of woman's holy virtue, and

the woman can succeed in doing so, even when possession has cooled desire and age dimmed her beauty ; but she must be a sublime being and possess lasting gifts of sentiment and thought ; if her companion be also an elect soul, who knows how to value this lasting and solid virtue, and who understands ideality of spirit as well as grace of form, so much the better.

Sublime beings and elect souls are always exceptional, and if, in the innumerable crowd of husbands and wives, they have reached the *yes* by the way of desire of the flesh, they soon find that the game was not worth the candle, and that the muddy swamp of weariness and animal familiarity of sex follows upon the first outburst of voluptu-

ousness. The woman sometimes succeeds in fanning and reviving it with inexhaustible coquetry, but one gets scorched, and the distaste may become even more obstinate the more ingenious are the remedies used to oppose it. A marriage inspired only by the desires of the flesh, maintained only by the bread of lust, is a very poor and abject thing, that can very rarely give peace to the mind, and much less happiness. Even in the most vulgar and sensual natures, there is something that rebels against the permanent animal, and raises its voice in demand for a more human form of food. Man, like the swine, wallows in the mud, but with this difference: he likes to wash himself, and to

look up to the heavens from the trough. It must be added that in marriage the dignities of father and mother only increase the responsibility of the two consorts to animate and enlarge the human nut at the expense of the animal pulp. The spirituality of the family impresses itself upon the coarsest nature and the most obtuse nerves, by warming the atmosphere and revealing a streak of blue in the heaven above.

Woe to the man who, in solitary and sad contemplation of his wife, says to himself: *My companion is only a female!*

Much worse is it, and woe to that woman who, in the night watches, looking at her husband as he snores,

says in a low, fretful voice: *My husband is only a male!*

There is hardly a man who would confess to his friends, or even to himself, that he married a woman to possess her. Even if it were true, modesty and pride fight against the confession, and with one of those clever self-deceptions with which we know how to embellish and deceive our own consciences, we exclaim in a decided and convinced tone, *I love her!*

If it be so difficult a thing to distinguish between gold and its alloy, true and false diamonds, eastern and Roman pearls, imagine whether it is easy to distinguish between the desire

of the flesh and true love. Yet this is just one of those most dangerous and hidden pitfalls which bring death to happiness in the battle waged in our minds between the to be or not to be, when we have to decide whether or no we ought to give the holy name of wife to the woman we desire. In other books of mine I have ventured to give some advice to those aspiring to matrimony to enable them to distinguish between true love and carnal excitement, which only affects one organ.

As I believe, however, that we have here before our eyes one of the gravest and most vital questions in the art of taking a wife, I may be allowed to enter more minutely into particulars.

Always doubt a sudden impression, so called a *coup de fondre*, if it has seized you after long abstinence from woman's society.

*
* *

For love also, and perhaps more for love than for the brain, it is prudent to remember the fasting Philip.

If you fear being enamoured of a young girl and are not disposed toward marriage, go and see all the married and young ladies most famed for beauty, grace, and elegance, and make your comparisons. If they be unfavourable to her, doubt directly the

seriousness and depth of your passion.

This has to do only with what we call physical love, but I speak of it at some length as it is the first door opened when a man and woman see each other for the first time. But I do not mean that it is the only one which leads you to the fatal *yes*. It ought only to give you an entrance into the ante-chamber where you must wait patiently until heart and mind open the doors of the inner rooms, where you will have to live all your life.

If there has been no *coup de fondre*, but the sympathy came gradually, developed and grew until it became a real passion, then all my counsels of examination and experiment will

be perfectly useless. At each visit you unconsciously, and without thinking of it at all, correct or confirm the first impression—now trimming, now increasing the warmth of the original sympathy. How many wooings, how many marriages have miscarried in our fancy without our knowing a word of it, or even having spoken an affectionate word to the person who awakened so sudden and strong an impression in us! A being suddenly appeared on the horizon, perhaps in an hour in which we felt the weight of solitude, the tortures of abstinence, and we said to ourselves directly: What a charming and sweet creature! Why do I not take her for mine . . . and forever?

The apparition passed from our

gaze, but we carried it home with us carved, or rather written, on our minds in fire. We saw her between the lines of the book we read, in our dreams, everywhere.

A few days later we see her in the street, or in society, and we vainly endeavor to reconcile the reality with the figure we saw in our imagination. The discord is complete. The woman is not the same, and smiling to ourselves over the love which we had dreamt of in the silence of our minds, we exclaim, "How could I ever have admired this vulgar, ugly, faded creature and wished to have her for my own!"

It is well, indeed, when the sketch can be corrected so soon; unfortunately it sometimes occurs after

several visits, when we may have compromised our heart and perhaps our word.

Prudence, then, *adelante Pedro con juicio!*

Science teaches that no force in the world is lost, no energy consumed, but that force and energy transform themselves one into the other without loss at all. Then I ask myself—but all the desires that men and women breathe out in the streets, in society, in theatres, or wherever they meet, where do they end? All those glances of the eyes which carry fire enough in their rays to burn and consume the whole planetary system; all those heart beatings which make the face

burn and attract two beings, two organisms, two lives to each other; when (as in most cases) they pass like meteors without fructifying the earth, where do they go? Those terrible energies, the fruit of the most intricate and sublime mechanism of our brains and nerves; into what do they transport themselves when they produce neither words, tears, lust, crime, matrimony, nor sin?

And yet these desires are many; they meet day and night in the crowded streets, in the whirl of railway carriages, in the dense crowd, in the solitary mountain paths; they plough through space, and if we were able to see them we should see the air lighted up by them as by the convulsive lightning of a tropical tempest.

But where do they go? Where is so much light consumed? Who warms himself with all this mighty heat? And where are the ashes of such a fire?

I know not; perhaps biologists and physicists of the future will tell us.

Another elementary, but most important aid toward the wise choice of a wife, is to see a large number of women before choosing her to whom you wish to give name, heart, and life.

If you have chosen your companion in the narrow circle of a village without leaving it, you may be proud to have gained the prettiest girl among a dozen companions. But woe to you, should you suddenly go to other villages, or still worse to some large

city; you may find the comparison odious, most odious, and yet irremediable.

This is why men who have seen and travelled a great deal generally make the best husbands; for making their choice on a larger basis, there is great probability of their choosing well, and perhaps also for another reason, women more easily pardon some former gallantry in their fiancés than a too ingenuous virtue. Don Giovanni has always seemed more pleasing to them than the chaste Joseph.

A woman who knows that she is preferred and chosen as a companion, by one who has seen and known a hundred or a thousand other women, is proud of it, and with reason.

I do not know if all women will share my opinion, but those who know most of the science of love will most certainly think with me. Were I a woman, my ideal of a husband would be a man who had travelled in all the six parts of the world, and had seen and admired all the women there.

And continuing my Utopia, but bringing it down to the level of earth; were I a woman and had I doubts about the sincerity of the passion awakened in my fiancé, I should wish him to make a journey through all Europe which should last a year, and if on his return he still found me worthy of him, I would give him my hand with the certainty of having a loving and faithful husband.

Time is a valuable element to add weight to our choice ; it is one of the best gauges of comparison by which to distinguish true love from carnal excitement. It is an old axiom, confirmed by universal experience, that time cools and extinguishes the small attacks of love, but strengthens and invigorates the more serious ones. The fatal brevity of our lives, the natural impatience of all those in love, conspire together to hasten marriage, but as far as I know and am able, I recommend men and women to acquire the sainted virtue of patience. I pray women again and again in their love affairs (in which as people say they are more *men* than we are), to follow the tactics of Fabius the temporizer : wait, wait, and still

wait. Love is centred in a most serious moment, one most pregnant with consequences to our whole lives, and a month or two more will only increase the dignity of the choice, and be a guarantee for the future. The honeymoon will shine all the longer above our horizon, the more we wait for it, with the poetry of desire and the ideality of hope.

CHAPTER III.

AGE AND HEALTH.

IF a man were only a generating animal, the problem of age in marriage would be very simple, and reducible to this formula: That as long as men or women can relight the flame of life they are *marriageable*.

That means that a man may marry from sixteen to sixty, and in exceptional cases up to seventy and eighty; and that he may marry a woman of from fifteen to forty-five.

Man, however, is not solely a

generating animal, but a thinking, reasoning, sentient, cavilling, wrangling being; a political, commercial, and religious creature; he manufactures brakes to curb the exhilaration of the gallop downhill, creates sophisms to spoil truth, and crutches to make athletes rickety; he tells many lies for amusement; in short he is the most clever and ingenious artificer in things of which he knows very little, in the whole planetary universe. Notwithstanding all these precious virtues, man finds the problem of age most complicated, when he wishes to take one of the daughters of Eve and say to her: "*Will you give me your hand, so that we may form a little future for ourselves?*"

All other elements being favourable, the ideal perfection in age as regards marriage would be as follows :

The man to be from twenty-five to thirty-five.

The woman from eighteen to twenty-five.

The man should always be a few years older than the woman, that is from five to ten years older, and this for many reasons. Man grows older more slowly than woman, and keeps his power of reproduction longer.

Before twenty-five or thirty years of age a man, unless he be a born libertine, knows comparatively little of the world of woman, and that only the worst, and in his choice

of a wife may make a terrible mistake.

Then, also, the products of a too early union are weak and inferior; the statistics of all countries show that there are more deaths among children of young parents than of older, or if they live, they are more weakly.

In the most simple problems of marriage, as in the most complex and metaphysical, it is always better to remember the fundamental doctrine, that harmony and happiness are founded on the agreement of two very different instruments, which ought always to accord with each other. We should pay attention, then, to false notes! If in an orchestra two instruments do not strike the

right notes, or if one goes too fast and the other too slow, it is a very small matter, and ends in a grimace upon the brow of the few who understand music.

But in marriage the slight discord is a wound in the heart of two beings, who had joined hands for a happy life ; and there is always a cicatrix left, which, like the wounds of veterans, acts as a barometer to the least change of temperature, of moisture, or of an atmosphere charged with electricity. The restless hand seeks to stop the sharp irritation, and lacerates the cicatrix, changing it to a chronic sore, which is always painful, but never healed.

Oh, men ! oh, women, study counterpoint, the harmony and melody

of the heart, body, and soul, day and night, if you wish to gather the blessed and perfumed rose of married happiness, in the garden of life.

Beyond the ideal perfection of number represented by the beautiful figure of two flowering and fragrant young lives, you may have all these possible combinations, which, with a *crescendo* of perils and accidents, render the accordance of hearts and bodies always more difficult. :

Two beings equally mature in age.

Two old people.

A mature or old man and a young woman.

A young man and a middle-aged or old woman.

We see all these combinations pass daily beyond our eyes, paired according to one or the other of these arithmetical formulæ—formulæ in which numbers weigh and govern human happiness with so tremendous an influence.

Let us study them one by one.

Man adult—woman adult :

This is one of the most favorable combinations, the freest from danger and painful discovery. If it be true that for this combination there is rarer access to the Olympus of ardent love, it is also true that shipwreck and cataclysm are rarer also. The navigation is nearly always on a

tranquil lake, in a *safe* boat, under the guidance of that best of helmsmen, good sense.

The majority of such cases consists of old attachments interrupted by unsurmountable obstacles, favoured again by some fortunate circumstance. The two who had loved and hoped for each other in their youth, find themselves free and their own masters, and all at once, at a single glance, have called up from the depths a bright panorama of fond visions, which for some time seemed to have disappeared in that abyss which buries and consumes all.

Do you remember, dear?

Yes, indeed I do! I seem to see you still at your window on that

Sunday, when, after looking at me so long, you threw me a kiss across the street, when I believed I was hidden by the convolvulus on my balcony.

Ah, yes, yes; that kiss was the beginning of a long idyl which I seem to see rising from the mists of the past as though by enchantment——

And from remembrance to remembrance a living and speaking world appears before those two once more, but more beautiful and more rose-coloured in semblance than it was in reality; enlarged by fancy, the first of artists, gilded by distant reminiscence, which is ever optimist.

The old couple have some wrinkles on their faces and some threads of

silver in their hair, but they see each other as they were twenty years ago; and if desires are indolent, and the clasp of the hands does not set the heart beating; if at night ardent dreams no longer disturb the peace of the passions, an odour of loving friendship surrounds them and binds them closer to each other day by day, and grows hourly more like love and less like friendship. They have so many remembrances in common. They have twenty years of life to recount to each other, and relating the sad and joyful events they alternately recount their recollections as though they had in reality lived together all the while, so that mine becomes thine and then ours, and without declaration or trepida-

tion the happy day arrives when, without any necessity of finishing the phrase or dotting the *i*, the two right hands find themselves clasped together, the lips join between a sigh that questions and one that answers :

Really you wish——?

And why not?

And the *why not* becomes *because I do* on the morrow, and the man and woman become husband and wife; and almost without agitation, without accident, they reach in safety the port of sure and tranquil happiness.

I recall two such marriages with emotion, those of Stuart Mill and Hillebrandt.

To these serene and tranquil unions

children are not necessary, but if they come they brighten and bless the house, bringing with them a nosegay of flowers and an odour of spring which makes those two happy mortals young once more.

Two old people.

Add some ten years to the arithmetical combination just studied and you will have a lower temperature, but still less danger to the happiness of the two beings who, defying ridicule and prejudice, wish to consecrate an old friendship upon the *altar* of matrimony.

I do not say altar as a matter of phraseology, nor to do homage to the religious ceremony of marriage,

but because I am deeply convinced that if there be nothing beyond the union of bodies or association of capital marriage is a sacrilege. The troth of two should always be plighted on an altar, whether it be that of Christ or of some ideal, of Moses or Mahomet, of poetry or religion.

Old people only marry once, either to win legitimacy for an old contraband love, or to give a legal status to the children. They are marriages of reparation, corrections of proof-sheets set aside for many years and forgotten. They merit our approbation and belong to those good actions of which Christ speaks, which, if done at the last hour, make death less hard and allow us to die at peace

and at rest with the faith, which illuminates our souls and prepares us to start in the train that bears us to eternal silence, or to the golden gates of the Christian paradise.

In the marriage of two old people who love each other, love is no intoxicating flower, but a friendship slightly gilded by sexual sympathy, which endures longer than the reproductive function even as it precedes it.

A middle-aged man and a young woman: If theory, hygiene, logical concords, and compacts proclaim the truth—which has all the force of a dogma—that an old man ought not to marry a young woman, daily practice

shows us that all these combinations are possible :

$$40 \text{ ♂} + 20 \text{ ♀}$$

$$50 \text{ ♂} + 18 \text{ ♀}$$

$$60 \text{ ♂} + 30 \text{ ♀}$$

$$60 \text{ ♂} + 15 \text{ ♀}$$

$$70 \text{ ♂} + 30 \text{ ♀}$$

$$70 \text{ ♂} + 20 \text{ ♀}$$

$$80 \text{ ♂} + 40 \text{ ♀}$$

$$80 \text{ ♂} + 30 \text{ ♀}$$

$$80 \text{ ♂} + 15 \text{ or } 18 \text{ ♀}$$

All formulæ, cold and precise as the numbers that make them up, but full of a terrible crescendo of precipices and cataclysms ! They arouse before us the phantom of a perfect pandemonium, and show us the horrors of a hell more dreadful than that of Dante.

How many tears, how much blood, bathe the path which divides those

figures ! What deep and hidden hatred, how much revenge premeditated during the night and put into practice in the clear light of day ; how many deceptions planned with the cruelty of art ; what repentance, crimes, intrigues, bitterness of soul ; how many tortures and struggles are written between those silent and lifeless figures ? Yet, still, you will find the rarest, most complete, and perfect happiness lying close to this hell, like an oasis in the midst of a desert.

For example, there are marriages of which the formula is $60 + 30$, and even $50 + 18$, that are real Edens of delight, where neither the most lovely and fragrant flowers of spring-time, nor the sweet tendernesses of voluptuousness, illimitable prospects, painless sighs,

conversation without words, nor all indescribable delights, are wanting; and where you have also the charm that belongs to difficulty, and all the fascination which surrounds things sacred.

But why among these mute and dead numbers do we find the extremes of human misery and blessedness? Why do we see the most noble sacrifices and meannesses, the most ignoble baseness and the highest ideality, bound together, with a cruel irony, by a malignant fate; why do we see angels and demons dancing together as though enchanted by some fantastic waltz?

For a very simple reason.

Because the happiness of marriage between an old man and a young

woman is nothing but an unstable and difficult balance granted to few. But to those who are capable of feeling it, it brings the sublime giddiness of the great heights. Everyone walks, but few take the leap to death. All climb the hills; exceedingly few have stood on the top of Mont Blanc. But those who do not break their necks, nor fall into the crevasses, experience, as they mount the highest and most difficult summit of the Alps, strong and fascinating emotions which make them proud and glad. All problems of life, whether great or small or indifferent, always have this dilemma hidden within them :

To dare or not to dare.

The Rubicon is either an historical fact, a myth, or a romance.

I leave it to historians to decide; but every practical problem of happiness has its rubicon, at which the whole world pauses.

Some turn back.

Some leap over it.

The most of them remain still on the bank all their lives, looking at the other side and scratching their heads. After forty years of age bachelors or widows stand before the rubicon of marriage and say:

Shall I go over or not?

The larger number wait so long to decide that the forty years become fifty and then sixty. The limbs become weaker and the river grows wider by the inundations and floods of so many autumns, and thus the

problem is resolved by want of resolution.

Others instead, after a short and earnest meditation, exclaim :

No, I will not leap it.

And both do well, because although the calculation of probabilities is rarely applicable to moral problems, yet it proves that the combination of an old man and a young woman is a very frail one ; at the least shock it is separated, as with fulminant mercury, chloride of azote, and all the infinite array of explosives ; then comes a detonation, a disaster, more often a putrid and fetid dissolution.

Some do not scratch their heads, but decide resolutely on the great step and leap.

A difficult and perilous leap in

which but few reach the other side unscathed. The majority of these intrepid individuals fall into the middle of the stream, which carries them away in its turbid and rough waters; others plunge directly into the mud up to the body and are fixed there, without being able to get out, a ridicule to others, a desperation to themselves.

In that garden of Gethsemane, where all men drink of the cup of doubt, in that garden of perplexity which we ought to leave with a *yes* or *no* and turn to the right or left, knowing that one path leads to happiness, the other to desperation, without knowing, however, which of the

two ways leads whither; in that garden, I say, my little book ought to serve as a guide to resolve one of the most difficult problems of marriage.

And I, who have arrogated to myself this right of counsel, will tell with a loud voice those who do care for my advice, my fundamental and organic precept on which all the other minor points must rest.

Marriage between an old man and a young woman may lead to happiness, if inspired on both sides by love.

Less surely will it lead to the same end if the love that leads them to the altar is all on one side.

It nearly always leads to unhappiness and ruin if the man is induced

by sensuality, or the woman by the desire of riches or by ambition.

And as this third case is the most common, I will explain at once why those terrible arithmetical combinations are so fruitful in domestic misery, adultery, and let us say crime, including those which the code does not regard.

At this point I see a malicious reader smiling, and hear him say that I ought to be classed among those madmen and deceivers who think they have solved the problem of squaring the circle or of perpetual motion.

You tell me a marriage between an old man and a young woman may

be happy, provided there be love on both sides. But this is an impudent joke. You may assure me with equal seriousness that I can catch a sparrow if I put salt upon its tail. How, when, and where can a young woman, fragrant of spring, who seeks with eyes, mouth, nostrils, with all senses, the pollen which will fructify her and make her a mother; how can she desire or love a man who is already on the decline of life and can offer his companion nothing but lasciviousness framed by rheumatism, catarrh, dyspepsia, and cough?

No, malicious reader, I do not joke; neither have I endeavoured to solve insoluble problems. I sincerely believe a young woman can love an old man, but he must still be a man

and handsome; for robust, flourishing, and cheerful old age has a beauty of its own, and if much is wanting it has the greatest resources and a certain delicate virtue, too, which a young man does not possess.

Love, too, has so many and such different forms, and is composed of so many different elements, that it can vibrate and burn even in the gray-headed.

The last love of Goethe speaks of all these; and the many warm and enduring passions awakened in young women by men eminent in politics, arts, letters, and science join in the chorus.

If in these loves the ardour of the senses fails—and it must fail—we

find much veneration, tenderness, and often a sweet compassion, a sentiment that always predominates in the female breast.

Young men are often bad husbands because they assume too much ; they pretend that love should be laid at their feet, as a tribute due to their beauty and transcendent vigour. They claim that they have the right to be loved for themselves, even when they on their side fulfil none of their duties.

The old man, on the contrary, feels his own weakness and implores love as a favour, and responds to it with a warm and inexhaustible gratitude every hour and every minute. He knows that little is due to him, and contents himself with a smile, a kiss,

or a caress, which he doubles and centriples with his unfailing gratitude. He guards his love as a treasure, which may be taken from him from one moment to another; he defends it with all his strength, encloses it in a tabernacle, and adores it as a god. His companion, therefore, has always the peaceful surety that she will not be betrayed by other women.

That these unions may be blessed by happiness, the husband and wife, above all things, must be *gentle-people*; that is persons of honour, who frankly accept the compact sworn to, without reticence or subterfuge.

Before the old man utters the tremendous *yes* he ought to present his account, even increasing the credit and diminishing the debit; explain himself clearly and dot every *i*. Therefore I entreat you when you make your *fiancée* acquainted with your financial position, be careful that each *i* has its dot, aye, even two.

* *

Such marriages as we are studying are far more frequent than we should at first suppose, and the fortunate cases are also less rare than the theory would lead us to believe; because women are far greater idealists in love than we are, and whilst we chiefly seek

beauty and carnal gratification, they seek other things of a superior order, which they appease with the heart of the artist, and the phantasy of the poet. The love of a man for an illustrious but ugly woman is a phenomenon rarer than a white fly. The love of a young woman for a great, but gray-headed man is tolerably common, and is sufficient to do honour to the female sex.

But a man of mature age has other things besides to offer a young woman: riches, a high social position, many ambitions he can satisfy; and he has a whole world of high, good, and pleasant things to lay at the foot of the woman, and can say to her: All this for a little love!

I, of course, understand that these

are international exchanges, which are far removed from love, and approach more nearly to commerce ; but the sacred books have often used the words *carnal commerce* without blushing, and why can there not be a little commerce in matrimony? Provided the balance does not incline too much to one side, and there is no deceit—in a word provided the one who weighs be a gentleman—such marriages may be happy, too.

When a man marries a woman very much younger than himself, people smile maliciously and point their fingers as if to ward off the evil eye, and to show the daring individual that the *Minotaur* awaits

him. In this case the populace cuts not one, but a hundred gordian knots with a brutal and bestial sword.

Adultery is a plant that grows in every clime, but more especially where a woman fails in esteem for her companion, and the clever sower and cultivator of these plants is always the husband.

I am so convinced of this truth, that if statistics of adultery were possible, I am certain I should find the greatest number amongst the unions of young people: for they also make contracts of buying and selling, of exchange of titles and dollars, in their marriages.

If you, with your white hairs, have the courage to marry a young

woman, study her character most of all. If she be a thorough lady in education she will be less likely to betray you than if you were young ; for she is proud of herself and would not willingly commit a sin toward which the world would be so indulgent ; for women also like difficult things, heroic undertakings ; because they like to say in their own hearts or throw in the face of their seducer the sublime motto : *noblesse oblige*.

Then in conclusion :

If, with your white hairs, you have the courage to bind your life to blond or brown tresses fragrant with youthfulness, place yourself naked

before the mirror in your chamber and look at yourself for some time. Then for a longer time put yourself before that other mirror of conscience which reflects us so inexorably ; and, having balanced the accounts of your physical *I* and your moral and intellectual *me*, see if you are still a possible man, a handsome and strong man ; and if you find yourself a young woman who is more an angel than a woman, more woman than female, offer her your hand without too many scruples or false reticences, and who knows but that when you die, you may then be able to say : “The last years of my life have been my happiest. In my youth I knew a hundred women, in my old age I have only known one ; and

she alone was worth the other hundred. Woman is the benediction *of life.*"

A young man and old woman:

Amongst the discordances of age between husband and wife, none astonish us so much, or I ought to say disgust us more, than when an old woman marries a young man.

There is the kernel of a great truth at the root of this scorn, which springs from the very heart of nature.

A man may be a man even at eighty years of age; and I cannot resist smiling when I remember a lady who complained of the exactions of her companion, a man over

seventy. We all remember Fontenelle and the Duke of Richelieu, in whom virility was only extinguished with life: in the first case the life lasting for a century, in the second for more than eighty years.

A woman, on the contrary, after forty-five, or at the most after fifty years of age, is no longer a woman, and the reproductive faculty is entirely destroyed. Hence the marriage of a young man and old woman is more contrary to the laws of nature than that of an old man and a young woman. The one may be fruitful, the other never. Add to the æsthetic exigencies of the man the rapid decadence of the woman after the change of life, and you will understand that the union we are

discussing is one of the most repugnant and repulsive. The motives which bring such a man and such a woman together are nearly always the most abject, and amongst those that offend the moral sense the most. On one side carnal gratification; on the other the thirst for gold; hence, prostitution on the part of the man, the most filthy and disgusting in the commerce of love. The man sells his youth, his virility, in exchange for money; and the woman who no longer has a right to love, buys it as a merchandise, and is satisfied with the voluptuousness given her by one whom she ought to be the first to despise! A market of lasciviousness and vileness, gold gathered from the mud—a mud,

however, which cannot be washed off, and which soils hand, conscience, everything it touches.

However, for the honour of humanity, such unions are exceedingly rare : those who buy and sell and are satisfied with a clandestine concubinage, hide the sin in the deep folds of our modern hypocrisy.

Maintained, yes ; a husband, no !

A woman, on the contrary, always desires marriage, because she has the pride of proclaiming to all the world, that, notwithstanding her many years and innumerable wrinkles, the wreck of her form which assails her on all sides, she has known how to find a companion at bed and board, who makes her happy.

Man, on the contrary, hides himself

on account of the modesty which is never wanting, even in the vilest delinquents; and hiding his shame in the darkness of a clandestine concubinage, hopes to preserve the esteem of men, and the gold he has gained with that reddened face of his. I will persist no longer on this theme because I hope that no young husbands of old women will ever read my book—they would soil it too much with their filthy hands—and because I have a great hope that they are all illiterate.

However, before leaving this lurid argument, I ought to say, for the love of truth, that ancient and modern history register some exceedingly rare cases of union between old women and

young men, in which neither the desires of the flesh nor the thirst for gold entered at all ; they treat of intellectual unions in which the concord of souls, the sympathy of hearts and thoughts, the harmony of taste, the affinity of humane propositions, most charmingly unite two persons whom the difference in age would generally divide.

Love is the greatest and most powerful worker of miracles, it is the thaumaturgus of thaumaturgists, and I in the small circle of my experiences know a young man, who has never been able to desire or love a young woman, but adores old women ; and if he does not marry any of his venerable friends, it is from fear of ridicule. It is true that in this case we treat of an

aberration of sexual instinct to be classed with sodomy and incest; but this *pathological nomad* is seated in an otherwise normal and perfect brain.

Intellectual unions on the other hand are physiological facts which offend no rights of nature, and ought to be respected and studied, as rare, but most noble phenomena of the human heart.

With regard to the health of those desiring to take a wife, and the health of our companion, I will recommend to them my *Elementi d'igiene*, and more especially *Igiene d'amore*, where I have fully treated this vital side of the great problem.

CHAPTER IV.

PHYSICAL SYMPATHIES.—RACE AND NATIONALITY.

LOVE is the strongest, the most irresistible, the most fatal of chemical affinities, and if potassium can extract oxygen from water, unite with it, light it, and make it burn with a bright flame and conflagration, consider the case of a man who first sees a woman and feels that she is precisely the atom with whom it is his irresistible destiny to unite, in order to kindle the flame of life.

It is no longer a simple electro-negative molecule which seeks, ab-

sorbs, and consumes the opposite electro-positive molecule, but it is an organism, an entire microcosm, which attracts another microcosm on its own vortex, so as to live united in the heaven of life, as two stars above live united in a mysterious and eternal marriage.

There are all the cellules of the epidermis, and all the pores of the skin, which seek the cellules and pores of the other organism; there are the inward parts which palpitate, the nerves which vibrate, the feelings which weep and sob, the thoughts that are crowded with all the soul's expression, and seek those inner parts, nerves, affections, and thoughts, which nature has made kin.

Not unjustly was the moment given

that applicable French name, *Coup de fondre*.

Lightning it is—that gigantic force which draws man and woman together and makes of them one being. In its minor grades we call the force sympathy; a little later, when stronger, we call it love.

I detest pedantic preachers of prudence, who make it consist of an emasculation of all virility of body and thought; but I also appreciate the need of repeating to you:

Distrust the flashes of lightning!

Perhaps you will say to me: "That is the same as preaching the doctrine: do not believe in hunger, thirst, or sleep."

Flashes of lightning are apparently all alike, but they are substantially different, one from the other. Some are harmless—give a great light, deafen one with the rumbling of thunder, and there they end. They are momentary eruptions of the senses, and nothing more. But there are others that burn, and cleave asunder all that they find in their way. From these no lightning conductor can save us, Either one is dead or is struck by lightning, which is the same as saying, electrified from head to foot by that force, which has emanated from another body which perhaps needs ours, and which perhaps we need ourselves.

Reason on it if you will, attempt to destroy the new passion in the

crucible of analysis. You belong to another ; that other belongs to you, if, as often happens, the lightning flash has been reciprocal.

The galvanization of love also occurs in another way, not, that is to say, by fulmination, but by small and slow currents which emit no sparks, but have continuous emanation.

First, a slight sympathy which touches the skin ; then a deeper irritation like a tremor invades the muscles, nerves, and viscera through the epidermis, and descends until it finds something living ; stopping at the marrow of the bones, since there is nothing left to electrify.

Theoretically, this second mode of becoming enamoured ought to be more tenacious and more durable than the first, from the axiom that intensity is equal to extension ; but practically we see a man and woman reach the same state either by fulmination or by a continuous current. It is only a question of time, whether we travel by express or slow trains ; we reach the same station in safety at last ! Love is so skilful and powerful a magician that he makes us his prisoners more than once in two different ways. First he strikes us, then he electrifies us slowly, and there is no human or divine power which can cure us of our passion. We are no longer individuals, we are things ; we are the *perinde ac cadaver*

of the Jesuits, a member of which has conquered us.

The admirable laws of chemical affinity are well known to us, and we can follow the kindred and repellent atoms which group themselves under the exact law of numbers. But those other laws which repel and attract human hearts and bodies are, on the contrary, scarcely divined by one who has eyes to read the great book of psychology, where the letters are so minute, the writing mysterious, and even the numbering of the pages incorrect.

Sympathy should be first physical, then moral, and lastly intellectual,

following the highroad which leads from the less to the greater, from that which is external to that which is internal.

Everyone knows—even the boccali of Montelupo* know—that opposite types seek and love each other. The blond attracts the brown, and *vice versa*; slight, small women please giants and athletes; delicate natures attract bears, and so on. But there are other occult and mysterious sympathies, where it is not a case of a

* Montelupo, a village on the Arno, is still renowned for its crockery and terracotta. It is highly probable that in the feudal times the mugs and drinking cups, which are called "boccali" even to the present time, were made there; they were exported in large quantities and became so plentiful throughout Tuscany that when any news was widespread, it was said to be known even by the Boccali of Montelupo. Hence the proverb.

combination of opposites, and where yet the attraction is exceedingly great and irresistible. How often has it been a wonder to us to see an ugly woman adored by a very handsome man, and an ugly man ardently sought after by women, and having witnessed this strange antithesis we begin at once to speculate what impure explanation, what vile or illicit trading with money or lasciviousness can account for it, while really it is a simple fact of elective affinity, the reasons for which escape us from our ignorance and shortsightedness.

Look around you, and in the small circle of your own acquaintance you will find several such singular and extraordinary facts. For my part I

have under my eyes a young man, the perfection of a man, aristocratic as regards birth, mind, and income, who, indifferent to the sympathies awakened in women at his every step, is completely absorbed in a woman who is hardly feminine, neither handsome nor young, and to thousands of others indifferent or contemptible.

I see another young man desperately in love with the ruins of a woman, where not even the compassionate ivy of coquetry covers the decay and deficiencies, and in whom there is a complete wreck of all delicacy of outline. He loved her so much that after many years he made her his wife, without any considerations of money.

It matters very little to your happiness or marriage whether lightning or inducted current has electrified you, but sympathy ought to exist between the man and the woman. For charity's sake, for the love of God, do not forget this; do not believe in the common proverb, which has made so many victims: *Marry if all considerations of income and of age agree. Love will come after.* No! love will not come after, except by chance, and in exceedingly rare cases. There will come to you, on the contrary, reciprocal antipathy, adultery, a lie in the very surname of your children; there will come all those lively intrigues through which our fine and virtuous modern society moves. If, in the first choice of love,

the man and woman do not approach each other with a tremor of holy fear; if their hands do not meet each other intoxicated with the touch; if the first kiss be not a passion, the first embrace a delirium, renounce forever the sweet and fond blessedness of the dual life.

The physical sympathy between a man and woman is a road which may lead to paradise, but how often may one lose one's self on the road before entering the field of affection and thought.

The only logical people in the world are those savages who, before giving themselves forever, make a trial on both sides, and separate or

marry, according to the result of the experience. But such moral and modest people as we are, must content ourselves with guessing; and woe to us if we make a mistake.

Fortunately, the sympathy which is awakened by a mere study of the woman's outward form nearly always agrees with that deeper one which arises from the agreement of the temperaments, by reason of the solidity which unites the different offices of an organism.

But it happens only too often that the interior is different from the exterior, and a man of ice has taken for his own a woman of fire, or *vice versa*.

In many codes of law incompatibility of temper is a sufficient cause

for divorce, but is not incompatibility of temperament a more prolific cause for domestic discord? Legislators and theologians have for some time raised this last veil which hides the shrine of love, but in their verdict or the clauses of their laws, have they contributed or not to the happiness of matrimony?

I believe not, for in modern codes the duties and genital rights of two married people are only confined to the preservation of the race. Beyond that they say nothing, and they do well. But of that other unwritten code which guides our individual conduct, do they say nothing, do they teach us nothing? They do not even give us a guide-book, or even only time-tables of fifteen centuries, like

those of the railway. After having studied man and woman for nearly half a century, after having dared to raise every veil, to sound every cavity, to feel every pulse that beats, every nerve that vibrates, as physician, anthropologist, and psychologist, this is all I have learnt.

The ideal of physical harmony between two married people is, that each one should feel the same hunger, and feel it for the same thing.

But as this occurs tolerably seldom, it is better that the man, who is always the leader of the orchestra of two, should give the *la*; that is, raise or lower the tone so that there shall be perfect harmony. The thing is

not so difficult; for if the great masters succeed in making the hundred instruments of an orchestra keep time and tune, should it not be easier to tune two instruments only?

Above all, remember that the music has to last many long years, and it is better to accustom your companion from the very beginning, so to proceed that she may not tire, but may reach the end unscathed. If you begin with quavers and semi-quavers, poor you! Your companion of the orchestra will accustom herself to that *tempo*, which will become a necessity for her—for you it may be a catastrophe.

Even without supposing an excessive lust in the woman; even if you have been so fortunate as to have found one with more heart than feel-

ings ; she will believe she is no longer loved, and in the secret silence of the night-watches will shed tears, measuring your love by the early change in the broken music. Notwithstanding what I have written of genital hygiene ; notwithstanding that others have followed me in the same road, throwing down the walls which supported the ignorance of the things of love ; women are still too often most ignorant, and measure love by the notes of music.* Think then on the future, which comes quickly, and like

* Whilst writing this, a courageous book on this subject has appeared in Germany : "*Der Kampf der Geschlechter, eine studie aus dem Leben, und für das Leben.*" (The Struggle of the Sexes. A Study from Life and for Life).—Leipzig, 1892. A volume of 173 pp. It is written by a woman already noted in the literary world in Germany, who has published several novels under the fictitious name of Franz von Wemmorsdorf.

a hungry dog devours the miserable present, and from the very first days begin with an *andante moderato*, and if your means permit, go even to the *allegretto* ; but for charity's sake do not proceed to quavers and semi-quavers.

*
*

I find I am treading on the field of the hygiene of matrimony, whilst I ought only to speak of *what precedes it*. Without making the experiment of the savages, you would like to know to a nicety the strength of the appetite for love which your future companion feels? Well, then, begin to study her family and, above all, her mother, who bequeaths her nervous system to her children, with all its accompaniments and connections, with sen-

sibility, chastity, or debauchery. Nothing is more hereditary than the capacity for love, and I have under my eyes terrible examples of calamities, which occurred from a study of the *fiancée* alone, without any thought of her father and mother.

I myself advised a dear friend of mine to marry a young girl who appeared to be, and had been up to that time, the goddess of modesty, the angel of chastity; I wrote my *milla osta* on the passport of my friend, and he, who was good enough to believe me a great specialist in this abstruse matter, embarked trustfully and happily on the tempestuous sea of matrimony. Alas! after a few months the goddess of modesty had become a Mepalura!—I had

forgotten to inquire after the temperament of her father and mother.

Having made the hereditary inquiry, and found the young lady with a *clean bill of health*, you must study her.

On an equality with other conditions, if you desire a tranquil and not exacting *wife*, seek these elements in her :

Light hair, blue eyes, fairly stout, a calm expression, natural movements, little or no nervousness, lips rather thin, no protuberance of the upper lip. Great love of children, a sure sign of a great development of the sentiment of maternity, which is the most powerful restraint on exaggerated desires of the flesh.

If, on the contrary, you desire an

ardent woman, you will more easily find her with black eyes and hair, dark skin, tumid and thickish lips, a thin frame. She will be nervous, very sensitive, of a capricious character, she will have glances of fire and snakelike movements.

All these physical and moral lineaments are very gross, and only have value as general observations, such as one reads on passports, equally suited to a hundred different people. I myself must make a criticism on these two examples of mine although they are taken from life, and are the result of many repeated observations. As regards the blonde and brunette I ought, for example, to make you at once aware that I mean to speak of those na-

tions in which there is a great mixture of ethnic types, which gives us in the same city, in the same village, women with light, chestnut-coloured or black hair. Where all are light, or all are dark, we still find women of ice and of fire, without any change in the colour of their skin or hair.

The fullness of body is of greater importance, for it has a more intimate and varied connection with the general nutrition of the whole organism. It is very rare to find an exacting woman amongst the corpulent, unless they are hysterical, and, from the protuberant lip and bosom, are condemned to sterility. It is equally rare to find a cold woman amongst thin ones.

The fleshiness of the lip is a good index by which to measure the sensuality of a woman, and it is so sure a one that I have given it an ethnic character, having found it in the most different races of Asia and Africa, where polygamy is usual, and physical love is the first pleasure and first occupation of man and woman.

* * *

I do not suppose it likely that any of my readers will marry a negress, Hottentot, or Australian savage, so I need not speak of the hybridism of races, or the consequences of the possible unions. If, before I die, I have the supreme joy of writing my monograph on

man, my *microcosm* ; then I shall be able to tell you my ideas about it, confessing to you at once my profession of faith, which is this, that all those who deplore the effects of the union of races, saying it is always injurious to the future generations, are mistaken ; as well as those of the opposite school, who always proclaim it to be useful. The crossing of a superior race with an inferior one lowers the first and elevates the second, thus giving a product of *medium* goodness.

The union of two races equally superior, generally gives an inferior product, but a product different from the two types who have fused their blood in the crucible of love.

The union of a mediocre and ele-

vated race, produces very different effects, according to conditions. These, however, are as yet little known, and must be studied by degrees.

If, however, you will never marry a negress, nor a redskin, and very probably neither a Chinese nor Japanese, it is easy enough for you to become enamoured of an English, German, or Spanish woman : and in the present day, when railways and telegraphs bring nations so near together, and break down barriers ; marriage is preparing the way for the future *United States of Europe*, which will certainly become the keystone of a cosmic republic, that of the *Civilized States of the World*.

The differences of type and sym-

pathy between opposite natures easily prompt to a warm love between dark and fair nations. More than one Italian has been obliged to fly from Scandinavia on account of the excessive sympathy which he awakened in those fair innocent daughters of the Edda; and if a fair-haired son of Arminius goes into Spain or South America, it is very seldom that he returns to his mother country without a wife, or without great spoils won in the mighty victories of love.

Is this a good? Is it an evil?

For the children it is nearly always a benefit; for married people it is often an evil. The felicity of husband and wife is sacrificed to the species, and it is your duty to set these different, but

probable, consequences of union in the balance and weigh them.

The differences which we sum up under the word nationality, are not as marked as race differences, but they approach them ; nationality is always and in every way the complex sum of infinite physical, moral, and intellectual elements which make an Englishman so different from a Spaniard, and an Italian so unlike a Norwegian.

To be of a different country from that of our companion implies not only the speaking of a different language but the loving different things, the feeling, thinking, hating, and desiring things unlike. We are all living fragments of a long history of many centuries, and to unite and make two beings agree who were born under separate

skies, educated with diversity of taste, with different ideals of religion, morality, politics, and customs, is possible, but difficult and uncommon. Look around, and you will find that the most frequent motive of these *mésalliances* is nearly always some pecuniary interest, or else one of rank, unless an all-powerful love has submerged the other incitements toward a reasonable marriage in its tumultuous and furious waves. Amongst other marriages those of American girl millionaires, who come to Europe to exchange their dollars for shields bearing the arms of our counts, marquises, and princes, are very well known.

The difference of nationality in two married people is just one point lessening the probability of their happi-

ness, and it is aggravated a hundred times if a difference in religion is added to the scale.

There is no great love without great faith, and he who loves much finds the speaking of another language, the following of dissimilar customs, the praying in a church or mosque, but insignificant obstacles. But great love, however long it may last, calms down and becomes a tender and fond habit; and when the sea of passion is calmed one looks through the water, now grown so clear and transparent, and sees at the bottom the points of diversity of faith, taste, and habits, standing up ruggedly, the rocks rising and coming to the surface, and rendering navigation difficult and full of perils. The honeymoon is then hidden behind the

dense stormy clouds, and the mariners run into the shallows of indifference, or dash the vessel against the waves of incompatibility and domestic discord.

The calkers may come with their gold and their coats of arms to patch up the wreckage, but it will always be patched badly, and the holy concord of bodies and souls will be lost forever.

CHAPTER V.

THE HARMONY OF FEELINGS.

FISH, birds, and mammals, when they feel themselves fit for love and wish to win it, develop new organs, new songs, the newest seductions, and with æsthetic or musical fascination engage in the pleasant warfare of voluptuousness. They show the female all they have of the best, all that is most irresistible, and thus obtain the prize of victory. So do men and women. They adorn themselves, hide their defects, and make a show of their beauty, but as the battle between them is fought on a higher

plane, each one polishes up rusty virtues, invents new ones, and sends his vices or moral weaknesses to prison or into exile.

Painters, carpenters, artists are about the house from morning to evening, in order to make everything clean and bright, as if in expectation of an illustrious guest or a great personage.

And they are right, for the guest they expect is no less than love.

The fish, birds, and mammals cease to sing and shed their horns when the breeding season is over, and become lowly and ordinary, even as they were before the marriage. And the companion, who has been enticed by the representation now realized, finds no room for odious

comparisons or regrets, for she and her mate are already separated and neither thinks of the other.

With man, however, when once the victory is gained, the curtain of the comedy of love falls. But the marriage remains.

It remains with the defects which return to view, with the vices which spring afresh from the pollard boughs; and with the little sins, returning from their exile and creeping home, one after the other.

This is one of the most fruitful sources of the deceptions of matrimony, and it must be prevented. We ought to discover the real truth, under all the coquetry of the sex, and to know what metal lies beneath the varnish and polish. This artificial

beautifying of man and woman who woo is not hypocrisy, but a natural and irresistible desire of showing our best to the person we love, and hiding from him our worst. But from this innocent desire we mount a flight of many steps, until we come to the blackest hypocrisy, which transmutes brass into gold, glass into diamond, demon into angel.

Exceedingly few see clearly when they have the spectacles of love before their eyes, and love has, not unjustly, been painted from the remotest antiquity with his eyes bandaged.

The lover is so blind, or, perhaps one would rather say, is so afflicted with altruism as to mistake colours, and, under such an hallucination, to see virtues where there are vices, to

find weakness of character agreeable, a lie a jest, and treachery a game.

The most acute spirit of observation, the most profound knowledge of the human heart, do not suffice to protect us from these seductions, which make us see the loved one through a rose-coloured glass.

Yet discord of character is the gravest peril, and unfortunately the commonest to marriage, and it may reach such a degree as to oblige husband and wife to separate. Where the law permits divorce, it becomes the terrible situation which, in official and legal language, is called *incompatibility of temper*.

And what does this dreadful word

mean? What monster is this, that can divide what love has joined, that can transform sensual pleasure to torture, honey to gall, heaven to hell?

When I write my book, *I caratteri umani*, which I have been meditating and working at for so many years, perhaps I may be able to get more light upon this obscure point of individual and national psychology. But at present I am satisfied to treat the problem on wide lines, and only as far as it contributes to the happiness of marriage. In the mean time let me state the terrible fact, once and for all, that among the many discords which are possible between the man and the woman, none exercises a more weighty influence than that which arises from want of union in character.

There may be happiness between a rich man and a poor woman; between a poor man and a rich woman; an elderly woman and a young man; an old man and a young woman; between two different intellects and educations; we have rare but well-confirmed examples of harmony between all these contemporaneous discords. But when characters cry out against and strike one another, *Lasciate ogni speranza o voi che entrate*; then desperation will be the habitual state of the dual existence.

Incompatibility of character does not mean a difference of taste, affections, aspirations; for differences are

necessary to perfect harmony, and the man and woman (we have repeated it a hundred times) love each other better and better the more the man is a man and the woman a woman—which is as much as to say the more different they are.

In common language incompatibility of character means, for example, to harness an ox and a horse of Arab breed to the same carriage; to put a tortoise and a deer to walk together; to tie a goose and a swallow to the same cord, and condemn them to fly together; and if these comparisons fall short of the reality, it is because their enormity does not reach by a very long way the psychical discords of men and women.

In that monstrous pairing of the deer with the tortoise, the horse with the ox, the swallow with the goose, only locomotion is treated of; but for the race that a man and a woman must take through life it is a matter not only of velocity, but of environment and measure; of all that can modify senses, sentiments, and thoughts. To find a comparison which at all suits or pictures truthfully the tortures of two badly matched individuals who must live together, I can only take that of a fish and a bird condemned to live together. But this comparison is not even good, for either the fish or the bird would die surely and quickly, but of the man or woman neither dies, but live a death in life, feeling

nothing of life but disgust, pain, and wrong.

Convicts also are paired with a chain without any regard to their sympathies, but they have at least the psychical relationship of crime, and often vice, which brings them near each other, and also that other common hope of escape that makes them allies and even brethren; but in that other galley of a badly assorted marriage there is not one chain alone, but a hundred and a thousand, all invisible, with as many nerves connecting two existences condemned to the sad communion of a common torture which is doubled for each by the suffering of the other.

There is the chain of the heart, the chains of taste and sympathy, the

chains of antipathy, habits, desires, and regrets; and along the length of these chains there run currents of spite, hatred, rancour, malediction, vengeance, and retaliation.

The slightest movement on one side is communicated to the other by the chains, and makes that other feel his pain, which he returns doubled by its own force and rendered crueller by the desire of revenge. So each wrong has an echo, and the echo is doubled and increased a hundredfold, until the whole life becomes a torment, as if every nerve had tetanus, and every organ of body and soul was transformed into a tooth suffering spasms of pain. When a long-forgotten wound is cicatrised, and a rougher movement than usual re-

opens the wound anew, in that martyred frame there is not a member which does not suffer nor a single feeling that is not pain.

This is the meaning of incompatibility of character, which has been adjudged with reason by legislators as a sufficient cause for divorce, and it is, and ought to be, more so than impotence, bad treatment, or any other cause of separation.

This want of harmony in sentiment has only too many and too varied forms, but at the foundation there is always this skeleton :

That which I like you dislike ; that which makes you happy makes me suffer.

Woman is an ermine, who allows herself to be killed rather than cross a field of snow soiled by mud.

Man, on the contrary, is like a chimpanzee, who loves dirt and soils himself with it. There is no part of his body or soul which does not love this mud.

How can two such creatures live together?

* * *

He is an optimist even to cynicism, an egoist even to adoration of himself, and his motto is, *Après moi le déluge.*

She is a pessimist from having placed her ideal so high that no human hand can reach it. She cannot live an hour without loving and

dedicating a thought, an act, or a sacrifice to the good of some fellow-creature.

How could they ever live together?

* * *

He has never felt the want of the supernatural, and believes neither in God nor in a soul.

She was born a mystic, and the maternal education has made her religious and superstitious. She has a very strong tendency to asceticism.

How could two such beings be happy together?

* * *

He is frank, expansive even to imprudence, impetuous even to wrath. He says out straightly what he thinks, swears and curses, only to

forget within an hour the storm which overwhelmed him.

She is close, shut as with seven seals, timid, diffident, and only expresses the tenth part of what she feels, and even regrets that slight expansion. Susceptible as a sensitive plant, she starts if she meets a grain of sand, a hair, or a feather which touches her. She finds an offence and want of respect in everything, suspects evil everywhere, and even in good seeks bad intentions with all the zeal of an inquisitor.

Will these two live happily together?

* * *

He is a misanthrope from indolence and diffidence; he detests society and avoids it.

She adores cheerful society, garrulous and merry talk, theatres, balls, not that she may seek an opportunity for sin in these places, but simply because she adores what is noisy and deafening.

Join these two together—how can they bless matrimony?

* *

By instinct and education he is democratic, detests all forms of despotism from the tailor to the government. He is a socialist, and would be an anarchist if he had not a sound heart and did not love his kind passionately.

She is of a decayed noble family, keeps and adores the family coat of arms; when anyone from

politeness calls her marchioness she reddens with pleasure, and her heart swells with pride. She has a profound and sincere respect for authority, and bows reverently before priests, soldiers, millionaires, and princes.

Can these two together bless *life*?

He is avaricious, but will not confess to it; he makes a secret of his income to be able to complain constantly of his poverty. Nothing escapes his domestic financial inquisition. Not a halfpenny is given in alms at his door, not a match burnt uselessly. Coffee grounds are never thrown away without first

extracting a second and third edition. The querulous wailings of his laments over excessive expenditure and taxation fill the air around him with a bad odour of mildew and closeness.

She is generous, and noble in her hospitalities and charities. She likes enjoyment herself, and to make the enjoyment of others, and to hear it responded to by all with "Thank you, thank you!" She cannot understand how one can torment oneself to-day by thinking of the still distant day after to-morrow; even the fascination of an *uncertain to-morrow* allures her. She believes warmly in Providence and Fortune, and earnestly defends the thoughtless.

And these are husband and wife!

He is always in a state of febrile excitement or of depression. He declares to all that the most unhappy man is he who feels no enthusiasm, and that the most happy man is he who feels everything, and hopes that he himself is such an one.

She instead is always cold, derides every form of enthusiasm, because it seems to her a species of madness; detests poetry, all psychical pleasures, and all passions when they pass 10° Centigrade; derides heroism, sacrifice, and martyrdom, contenting herself by declaring it to be the matter of a novel or a stage play.

And these two—can they live happily together?

These few examples, taken from the stage of the real world, will be sufficient to give you an idea of the many discords of character one finds in the union of marriage.

Certainly all are not so flagrant or so keenly accentuated, but they are more complex and complicated, whilst the discord is rarely upon one note only, but upon many together.

And what can we do to defend ourselves from the peril of *incompatibility of temper*?

In one way only: by studying and restudying the character of her whom we wish to make our companion for life. After being convinced that she will show herself better than she really is we must make every effort

to surprise her in undress, or, better still, in a state of nudity. Naturally I speak in a figurative sense. I should wish to see her nude of all artifices of coquetry and hypocrisy. Begin to examine the moral surroundings in which she lives, and before studying her study the future father- and mother-in-law. She is only a branch of that plant upon which you wish to graft your life, and a great part of the children's character is that of their parents.

It is exceedingly rare for a loose, libertine mother to have a chaste daughter, and a lily of innocence is hardly ever born into a family of impostors. We have spendthrift sons of a miserly father, and *vice versa*; bigoted children of atheistic parents,

and disbelievers sons of bigots; but as regards moral habits there is very rarely the heredity of antagonism.

Examine especially the moral surroundings in which the young girl was born and has grown up; her habits, the books she reads, the amusements she prefers. Gain information as to the character of her friends, for in them as in a glass you will often see the soul of the woman you wish to make yours.

I know an angelic woman with many friends who vie with each other in loving her, and are jealous one of the other for her affection. These friends are all unusual women, of refined tastes, delicate feelings, and generous hearts. They all chaunt her virtues in chorus, and, without know-

ing, I judged her from her friends to be an angel, and I was not mistaken.

After having made your psychological research as regards her parents and friends do not disdain to descend to a more humble sphere. Question her maid, cook, coachman, dress-maker, and the labourers on her estate: all those who for one reason or another serve and obey her.

No one knows us better than those who serve us, for whom we make no pretence to hypocrisy or ostentation of false virtues, and if a lady's maid does not know how to make a psychological analysis of the young lady she can show us the most intimate secrets of her character. Noble, generous, and good

natures never ill treat their servants; for they feel all that compassion for them which their position merits, and apply toward them the daily and domestic virtues of a tender and affectionate benevolence. Always doubt the character of those who are changing their servants frequently. They are nearly always ill disposed, and being unable to vent their evil instincts in higher circles, begin to torment their slaves at home.

They pour forth on the lady's maid, dressmaker, or hairdresser all the disappointed vanity, hidden jealousy, bad temper, and anger of their petty social struggles.

Then if they feel the need of being despotic they satisfy it by

using their power over those poor victims paid at so much a month, and condemned to live on the moral excrements of their masters. I know ladies of the highest financial and hereditary aristocracy who are not ashamed to beat their maids brutally and cruelly. If you succeed in learning this do not overlook it, do not pardon it, but fly the contact of one who will exercise her own evil-mindedness and despotism upon you, and later on, upon your children.

* *

I prophesy that when you have finished your examination on heredity and friendship, and that closer inquiry into your dear one's home affairs, you will find the sister soul to

your own—she with whom you will sing the hymn of perfect happiness all your life, the only perfect happiness, that of a union of two. But this is the rarest good fortune. In most cases you will find neither absolute discord nor ideal harmony, but a partial accord, which with labor and good will you will be able to convert gradually into perfect harmony.

If your love is great and deep, if it pours out from the viscera of your whole organism, if she loves you well and enough, rest assured that the rocks will fall to pieces, the mountains be levelled, and the thorns be removed, for love is the most skilled magician, and knows even how to convert gall into honey. Woman is

cleverer than all the rest of the world in this thaumaturgic work, and you must really be the most stupid egotist, the most antipathetic creature in the whole universe, if your companion cannot succeed in making you agree with her after a few months. And yet, take care. This harmony ought not to be that of a victim resigned or a slave subjected ; that would be an artificial agreement which lasts a short time only, and thrives but ill. It must be a slow and clever adaptation of the sharpness of the one to the roundness of the other. It must be an intelligent and tender acclimation to surroundings, tastes, and habits, so that the rebellious sprig may be bent without pain or breaking, so that the vine leaves may seem pleased at their con-

nection with the pollard* which supports them, and the bright and ruddy bunches of grapes seem to smile with joy on foliage and pollard alike. Happiness, too, is a tree which requires a wise and loving cultivation. We men are the pollards; the vine is our companion who leans upon us, bound there by the withes of love and of reciprocal indulgence. Above all things marry a good woman, one, too, who loves you—not for the title you bear, not for the gold which fills your chests, but because she admires and esteems you, and is proud to bear your name.

And then you may be sure that the

* It is customary in Tuscany to plant pollards in the vineyards for the purpose of supporting the vines, and these are bound to the pollards with willow twigs.—TR.

little discords of character will be surmounted, and in the indulgence with which your companion so patiently bears with your defects you will find every day and every hour a proof of that love which will only cease with your last breath.

CHAPTER VI.

HARMONY OF THOUGHTS.

UGHT we to marry a silly, an intelligent, or a literary woman?

If this question were to be answered by public vote we should probably have the following ratio :

For the silly woman, 10 votes.

For the literary woman, 0 vote.

For the intelligent woman (that is, of normal ability), 90 votes.

In this century, in which the voice of the majority takes the place of right and reason, the problem would be solved by that meeting of which I have guaranteed the result.

In all cases, however, this verdict ought to be preceded by many and varied comments if it is to be converted into practical counsels to those about to take a wife.

The ten who have voted for the silly woman would say that they did not desire an idiot, but, on the contrary, a woman slightly foolish, but not too much so. But together with this defect they would wish to have her handsome, young, and very good-tempered. They seek above all a companion who helps them to keep healthy and merry. There is nothing more charming, more sympathetic, more irresistible, than a little absurdity from a pretty mouth. It makes one laugh; and when our laugh provokes that of the one who has uttered

it, and she shows her beautiful teeth in rows like pearls, oh ! bless the folly and her who spoke it.

The ninety who have given no vote to the literary woman wish us to understand that they like an educated woman, but detest pedantry, and that nothing in the world could make them desire a *bas-bleu* ; much less a *chau-pette-bleue*, a variety of the first, so named by Balzac.

Having heard these comments, let us now make ours. It is only too true that in our Italian society the general culture is much below that which one meets with in France, Germany, England, and the United States. We have the courage to confess this in our own home if for no other reason than with the hope

that the shame which mounts to our faces may induce us to remove this national blot from our children.

Men of little culture desire even less in their wives, in order that at least in their family circle their credit may be unimpugned. From this arises a general repugnance to teach our girls too many things, from this comes the antipathy to the higher girls' schools and to all that tends to elevate the intellectual level of our companions. Up to the present time the hasty and ill-digested attempts have not helped to modify public opinion for the better; the only people who dedicate themselves to higher learning in one way or another are the ugly, hysterical, or very poor.

We all open our eyes very widely

before a lady doctor or a literary woman as before some wonderful phenomenon which perhaps may change our "Ah!" of astonishment to an "Oh!" of admiration; but the woman will always be a phenomenon to us.

And she is really a phenomenon, an idol to put on altars amidst the incense of our adoration; she is a woman who thinks as much as a man, has the learning of a professor, writes books that are read, or paints pictures and makes statues to which are awarded prizes; an idol to be admired if beauty be added to this virtue and if grace accompany it; a half goddess or a goddess if the talent does not go arm in arm with pride, and if genius is surrounded by

a fragrant and flowering womanliness. But who finds these phenomena, and who, having found them, marries them? Then if the literary woman is ugly, and impolite, if her body and voice proclaim the certificate of her baptism, which makes her more man than woman, oh! then we are all agreed in not wishing to have her for a wife. It is a new species, a psycho-physico hermaphrodite, whose books, pictures, and statues we admire, but whom we have no desire to share a room with.

In sexual union the harmonies of relation ought to show themselves, in thought as well as act, in order that there may be happiness. Therefore

it is that man was made by nature more intelligent than woman. Perfect harmony is only to be found with a man who thinks vigorously, does what he wishes with energy; who rules and guides the woman in the paths of life and the glories of conquest. The inversion of these relations means to be out of tune and in discord; it is an humiliation on the part of the man, and (let us admit it) on the part of the woman also, who in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred wishes to be loved, caressed, and also adored, but who likes to feel herself ruled.

Woe to those women of intellect superior to the husband, whom they must pity, correct when in error, and too often pardon for his folly and absurdities!

Love is a chemical affinity; and its composition is proportionately stronger the more widely different are the elements in the combination. The ideal of perfect marriage is the combination of a man thoroughly a man, *exceedingly so*, and a woman thoroughly a woman, *exceedingly so*. Whenever a man acquires a feminine tendency of character and a woman a virile one the chemical affinity diminishes in intensity, the combination alters at the least touch or first contact of a third body which comes near and has a greater affinity for one or the other of the two elements.

A very intelligent woman and a man of less than mediocre intellect are combinations of bodies which can

only have an exceedingly weak affinity between them. The first has a mode of thought which is virile, and the second has a feminine one. And only too often the third element comes to correct the elective affinity, and the literary woman takes a man of genius, who rules her, for a lover, or a robust man, who calms her; and the husband of small intellect comforts himself in making love to an illiterate peasant woman, or a maid without grammar, with whom he can show his intellectual pre-eminence and revenge himself on the superiority of his wife.

I ask pardon (on my knees if necessary, for I know that my sin

is great) for treating of a more and a less in the measure of thought.

This is really an infantile or Australasian psychology; but the *much* or the *little* are always the first approximations to the solution of every problem, and the *how much* always goes before the *when* and the *how*.

I admit, then, that in the harmony of thought between the man and woman the amount must always be greater on the man's side. The culture of the man is always progressing, and with it inevitably that of the woman also, but this ought always to remain a step below ours, not because we do not wish to lose the pre-eminence of potency, but because the labour of the brain is more

difficult and perilous in the woman's case than in the man's, and her energy naturally less.

Look around without leaving Italy and tell me how many *normal* women, how many healthy and perfect women, there are in our literary circle. I will not continue on this theme lest I draw upon myself a shower of poisoned darts. Several are my venerated and admired friends, and I wish to keep their friendship until my last breath. But if I should say that many of them are sterile, and many very nervous, ought they to feel themselves offended? I esteem them too much to believe it! Man is so accustomed to consider himself superior to the woman in the world of thought that if he

finds an error in the orthography of a lady's letter he is as pleased as if he had found a diamond in the sand of a river. That little error, which was made in the hysterical haste of a moment of love's expansion, is really a diamond, because it confirms and assures us of our intellectual superiority, and shows us all at once the feminine and seductive grace of the being we love. An error of orthography or even of grammar in a feminine handwriting is a wayward little foot, which peeps out from under the skirt of the dress, and hints to us the glories of the sex, the inexhaustible delights of voluptuousness. It is a coquettish curve which in spite of the thick clothing whispers in the ear palpi-

tating with desire: Eve lies underneath, Eve who is awaiting Adam—and desires him.

* * *

Harmony of thought between the sexes ought to spring from the agreement of the unlike, and in such a way that no pride should be offended, and each one be satisfied to make a sum instead of a subtraction.

A scientific man and a female artist can form a delightful harmony upon two notes; a naturalist also and a woman who adores music; a psychologist, an inexorable analyst, and a woman who sees the comic side of things at once; and thus there are a hundred other combinations of

different intellectual values, which, summed up, leave each one contented with his own. Besides special fitness, there is a sexual character which impresses itself upon the thought of the man and woman. Man discovers, finds, creates; woman divines, distinguishes, analyses. Man reaps, woman gleans. Man with too great haste, often with too great pride, grasps too much and lets it fall from its hands; woman walks behind and gathers up what he has lost.

Man has less tact in judging his surroundings, and often gives a cuff when he means a caress; woman, on the contrary, like a delicate galvanometer, feels the slightest electric or magnetic oscillation in the air

which surrounds her, and for this reason she is a most valuable instrument to a politician, a writer, or an artist who attempts new roads to beauty, and must conquer the resistance of the majority. Unhappy the man who before printing a book, exhibiting a picture, or making a speech in parliament has no loved woman from whom to draw life and warmth. If a sailor never leaves port without consulting the barometer, so man never ought to prepare himself for any undertaking without having first consulted that barometer of all barometers, the woman who loves him. How many ships have been wrecked from want of this precaution, neglecting to take it, through pride or inattention !

You may be the greatest man of genius and your work the fruit of long and profound meditation; and yet you may rest assured that in the great polyhedron of truth some plane has escaped your sight which will be seen by the woman who loves you, because she is a woman, and sees many little things a man does not see; and because she loves you she has a magnifying lens before the eyes of her heart which makes all that may injure or benefit you appear gigantic.

It is very rare when a woman has conquered our moral and physical sympathies that we love her less for some discord of thought; but if we

want ideal perfection we must marry bodies, hearts, and intellects. In this case we must seek in our companion a discreet culture, an exquisite taste for the beautiful, a delicate spirit of observation, a divination of human character. If you find all this in one woman, and if she is beautiful and good, you may deem yourself the most fortunate man in the world, and may declare to the whole earth that you have not one but three wives, having married intellect, heart, and thought.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FINANCIAL QUESTION IN MARRIAGE.

BEFORE breeding time birds build their nests to receive their future young and to protect them from the weather. Many men, more improvident than the birds, marry without knowing where and how they can house the children of their love. Air, earth, and forest afford food to birds gratuitously; to man only the butcher, the baker, and eating-house keeper give food, and they have the weakness to ask payment for their services. Economic improvidence in marriage is the bane of all social

decadence, and it is precisely amongst workmen and the unemployed, or amongst those who are always struggling and succumbing, that one finds it most, for they have become thoughtless fatalists, to whom the day is sufficient. Fatalism has many forms, but it is always a cowardly emasculation of self, or an even more cruel mutilation, for it undermines the strength of the will and leads us to renounce all that is best in us. In individuals it is emasculation or mutilation, in nations it is suicide; the Ottoman Empire will soon show us whither *Turkish fatalism* leads.

I am compassionate, and believe that I pay my debts of charity toward those who have wrecked their life; but when a starving fellow begs alms

of me, or pleads his *large family* or *many children* as an excuse for his moral and physical demoralisation, anger gets the better of me and I exclaim: *Why, then, did you have so many?*

And this exclamation is not an insult to misery nor a curse; it is the voice of reason, which if it could be heard in the homes of the poor would suffice to solve the social problem. I am a Malthusian impenitent, and as long as I live I shall always say to those struggling with poverty:

Love, but do not beget children.

In vain priests and rugged moralists of *Providence* combat Malthusianism, which has now become a social institution, and without the need of written codes governs the economy of

the family in France, Italy, Germany, and even in chaste and fecund Albion.

In vain my *Elementi d'Igiene* were put *ad indice*, for from year to year the Malthusian apostolate has made new disciples, and will continue to do so.

Neither do I side with those who believe, with too great a faith or fanaticism, that a restriction in the number of births is sufficient to resolve the social problem. No, certainly not ; it is not enough ; but it clears the ground of the most thorny brambles among which human felicity gets entangled ; and a comparison between the proletariat in the populous cities of Europe and that of the desert regions of South America is sufficient to convince us that prolific improvi-

dence is also the prolific mother of hunger, disease, and death.

If, then, you are not a Malthusian, nor desire to be converted to the new doctrine, if you have no straw to build your nest, do not take a wife, but increase the glorious number of the animals of rapine and cuckoos.

I know very well that the most hateful and disagreeable problem of matrimony is the economic, but we cannot avoid nor solve it by shutting our eyes and disregarding it.

To love and be loved, to feel that our life is doubled and the horizons of the future enlarged, to drink from the eyes of a woman who is a perfect fountain of delight, to feel the doors of

paradise opened to us by her lips; and then all at once to be obliged to speak of *income* and *dowry* amidst such intoxicating pleasures; then to remember between one kiss and another that to harbour all this paradise we do not possess, I cannot say a house, but not even the most modest of rooms! It is hard, cruel, abominable, but it is necessary!

The *quart d'heure de Rabelais* in the affairs of love, and the exclamation of the Trappists who at table say to their brethren: *Remember we must all die*, are the waiters who, entering the guest chamber, present the *bill* to the gay and thoughtless merry-makers. But in matrimony the accounts must be made out before, and drawn up seriously, calmly, and inexorably.

There is only one man in whose case I could overlook a want of this prudence, and it is he who feels that he has the strength to fight for and the energy to gain a position, and to the man who strikes his forehead and exclaims, *Numen adest*. What does it matter if such a man has no fortune, nor even a dowry with her whom he loves? He has faith in himself founded not upon pride, but upon the consciousness of knowledge and power; and this is more than a patrimony, for neither phylloxera, bank failures, nor shipwreck can assail it. It will last as long as life itself, and its results still longer.

But how many such men are there? With the experience of more than half a century I recommend all others

to use such foresight as is near akin to fear. The whole history of Italian finance, and the whole chronology of our innumerable ministers of finance, teach us that the balance of expenditure is always greater than that of the income. Just fancy when these are added up by that maddest of treasury ministers whose name is Love!

The following words must have been repeated more than a thousand times between a kiss and a sigh, *A cottage and your heart!*

But common sense has succeeded in throwing so much cold water on the phrase as to render it ridiculous, and to relegate it to the museum of comic virtues. However, notwithstanding the many years I have lived, I still

have the ingenuous good nature to believe this phrase when it comes warmly and spontaneously from two loving hearts, and when those two hearts live in two organisms superior in intelligence and sentiment it may yet be true; the cottage may soon become a house, perhaps even a palace.

But how many such are there?

The rest no longer say, *A cottage and your heart*; but, *A palace even without your heart. A hundred thousand francs income, with or without the heart.*

In the first pages of this book we have seen how and why the economic consideration dominates marriage in civilised society with all the rigour of a tyrant, how it commands every-

thing, and is the "to be or not to be" of a family.

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As regards the balance of fortune, the ideal in marriage would be that both husband and wife should be equally rich, or both have moderate means. It is not necessary that there should be absolute equality, but it ought to approach it. In these fortunate cases the equality of the income increases the dignity of the family to a fellowship, and is necessarily accompanied by many other harmonies of habits, tastes, and needs.

An *hyper-ideal* of perfection would be this, that although the amount of these incomes may be the same, the separate units should be of a different

nature. Thus if the husband be a rich land owner the wife should hold house property; and if she has a large share of money in the funds the other should own lands or houses. In this way even the most unexpected political or meteoric disturbances would never strand the family. In many cases a good profession in the hands of the husband is equivalent to a rich dowry in the wife; but even here one must remember that life is uncertain, death certain. And, in truth, where the income proceeds entirely from the work of the father of the family this very fact is often a cause of ruin to the family well-being. They have no land, houses, nor money in the funds; a lucrative employment gives them riches, and parents and

children live upon them without putting a penny aside. Then a railway accident or some illness unexpectedly kills the father, and from a gay, rich life they are reduced to the most squalid misery.

Empleomania is a Spanish word, and it sprung up in Spain as if in its native soil, but if we have not registered it in our classical dictionaries we have the equivalent in the speech of the common people. And above all we unfortunately have the thing it represents; and it is one of the most exact measures of our inertia of intellect and will. In the middle class, and especially in its lower ranks, the daily dream of the good mother of a family is to give her daughter to a *government official*,

and it is the dream of a thousand small men, young, short-sighted fellows of slight phrenic development, to have some *official situation*, no matter what, so that in the morning they are not obliged to think how they can pass the day or to make any itineray, but just go to the office at fixed hours, and at fixed hours return home. To do what others desire them to do, without the trouble of thinking themselves, and to muse on the sweets of the Sunday rest for six days in advance; for eleven months to feel the delights of the twelfth, that of the vacation, and to be able to think that every month of the year has a certain day which bears the number 27: a blessed day on which,

whether it rains or pours, whether Liberals or Conservatives are in power, whether Crispi or Rudini is ruling, the paymaster is ready and they receive [their salary—ah! these are serene and tranquil pleasures which make mothers weep for joy, wives leap for pleasure, and the hearts dance in nine-tenths of those Italian bipeds who love the peace and security of the morrow . . . and the 27th of the month.

* * *

If there be an inequality in the riches of two married people it is a hundred times better that it should be in favour of the husband.

A woman is never humiliated when she is poor and marries a rich man,

or when, with moderate means, she marries a millionaire. However much she may be oppressed by social laws, however often she be placed below man in position, she brings him so many treasures with her beauty, youth, grace, and all the prizes of her womanhood that they weigh in equal value to gold, millions, and coats of arms rich with a hundred emblazonings.

There is perhaps another less noble, but more human, reason, which explains the inequality of our judgment on the subject of matrimony between persons with different amounts of income.

It is precisely because the woman is set a peg below us by law and custom that she can accept riches

from us without any feeling of shame; besides, it is very difficult, if not often impossible, for her to gain sufficient by hand or brain work to maintain the family. Everything, then, conspires to enable her to give her hand to a rich man without selling or prostituting herself.

When instead of this it is the man who accepts the riches from the woman, without balancing them by great genius or by a very high social position, he always renounces that manly dignity which ought to be his nobility; he stands degraded before his wife, lowered, and at the least collision with vanity or passion he may be struck full in the face by an insult which ought to sink into his very heart.

I know several cases in which a very rich woman fell desperately in love with a handsome, cultivated, but poor young man, and he to save his own dignity fled from her love. And the lady followed and conquered him, trusting courageously to the proverb, *Ce que femme veut, Dieu le veut!*

They were married, and he loved her, working constantly with his pen, brush, or chisel, having sworn to himself and to her that he would only live by his work. Noble and touching struggles for personal dignity, of love and pride, which one but seldom sees, but which console our sight, daily saddened by so many simonies of luxuries, so many pretences of heroism, so many individual, social, and political lies, which darken the

ing a perfumed Havana, he will raise to himself a monument of admiration and acknowledgment amidst the blue fumes of his cigar.

And is he happy? Happy, perhaps, but never enviable; for I know no true and durable happiness which degrades dignity, which hides itself in the depths of the soul, which can silence itself with the gag of sophism and the accommodation of conscience, but that, like a steel spring, it will burst and spring from its bonds the more unexpectedly the greater the repression. A man who in the inexorable soliloquies of his own conscience has something on which he dare not think, or has a room in his house which he can never visit without a shudder or remorse, is never happy.

And even if the long training in cynicism succeeds in silencing the cry of repressed dignity, there will come a day of domestic discord, of duels fought between husband and wife, with the weapon of bitter smiles, cruel compliments, and insinuations full of perfidy and venom, a day when the wife, striking her fan on the arm-chair with little convulsive blows, will cry: *But in short, my good fellow, I keep you. . .* If that man, in such a moment does not redden to the roots of his hair, if at that moment his saliva is not changed to gall, nor forms a lump in his throat, if he does not feel his very heart and source of life poisoned, that man is not a man, but an unclean animal who has sold his manhood for a

handful of gold; he is a most abject being, a hundred times more despicable than the poor prostitute who sells her body to gain her daily bread.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE INCIDENTS AND ACCIDENTS OF MARRIAGE.

BUT even if you have chosen the best of women for your companion, whether it be due to your merit or your good fortune, the great problem of happiness is not yet solved, for there are so many incidents and accidents which disturb it when least we expect them.

Your wife is never a meteorite fallen from the sky, but a fruit still attached to the branch, and this branch is taken from a trunk, which is the family to which she belongs.

When you marry her you must inevitably marry her relations also; you must enter a *clan* which may be a garden of roses, but may be also a wasp's nest—nay, even a nest of vipers.

Do not allow yourself any illusions, believing that when once you are legitimate master of your companion you will be able to isolate yourself in the nest of your domestic felicity, chasing away wasps and crushing the vipers, if there should be any. I will suppose that the woman loves you much, and adores you above all creatures in the world, but the *clan* from which she has been taken will complain of you, protest and conspire against you. Her parents have ceded the govern-

ment of one of their provinces to you, but still hold the *protectorate* and place a *resident* near, and they reserve the right of intervention in many, unfortunately in too many, cases.

The idea of a wife, then, would be that she should be an orphan with only the most distant relations or guardians, who are happy to have her well married. But here again there are new complications. To be an orphan at an early age means, since the parents died young, to belong to an unhealthy stock. The decadence of many English families is due to this very fact. The younger sons of the nobility, who bear a noble name, but have an empty purse, seek to equalize bla-

zonry and finance by marrying orphans, or only daughters, and thus they bring into the new family the risk of an infirm state of health and sterility.

It is only too true that all the gravest problems of life are so framed that when you have succeeded with patience and labour in untying one knot, others form under your fingers.

The wife, however, might be an orphan from other causes, independent of the health of the parents, and that would be the highest ideal—for example, a girl who had escaped from a fire, or a railway accident, in which both parents (alike robust) were killed. I am supposing things incredible, or at least improbable; I make cruel conjectures, but what can

I do? A scolding, wicked, or jealous mother-in-law is worse than a fire and railway disaster together.

Those good, courteous, intelligent mothers-in-law need not alarm themselves—those who become a second mother to their sons-in-law, who double the delights of the dual life, who bring you the valuable blessing of experience and disinterested affection, and who act in the domestic storm as conciliatory judges. Hosanna and everlasting glory to such beings, sent by Providence to double your happiness.

For I only speak of others who, without being bad, are women, or rather men, with all the congenital defects of the race of Adam.

The best of mothers-in-law always

sees in you an intruder, a rival, a man who has robbed her of her daughter, and since she is good she will not worry you ; but she will make scenes of jealousy ; she will not plot against you with your wife, but will swallow so much bitterness day by day in the secret silence of her house as to enlarge her liver, so that some day or other her moral jaundice will be scattered through the atmosphere of your home, and you too will feel the bitterness.

I understand and am indulgent. That bitterness is distilled from the deepest and most delicate regions of the heart. To have loved a daughter for twenty or thirty years, to have brought her into the world with pain, to have suckled her with spasms, to

have educated her with a wise love, after having breathed the same air, eaten at the same table, shared bread and tears ; and then for the first comer, just because he wears trousers and has an impudent moustache, to rob her of all that treasure with an arrogance as if he claimed and took his own—that is hard. And as if that were not enough, the daughter, the angel of her domestic temple, runs after the trousers and moustaches, and goes away, abandoning her mother's and her own house, as if she were leaving a room at an hotel in which she had passed the night.

Let us be just ! Who will dare to throw the first stone at that poor woman, the pitiable mother ? Who would dare ill treat her if she asked

as a charity the favour that her daughter's new home should be near hers, if she implored you to allow her to visit her often? Man is egotistic and feels paternity less than woman, but even if only in a slight degree he ought to understand the hidden hell of a mother-in-law who has to watch her daughter leave her own nest.

The marriage of a loved daughter is an event expected and desired, but it is like a birth, a blessing accompanied by tremendous pain. Elect natures feel the pain, but do not show it, lest they should give pain to others, and never convert it into hate.

Others, on the contrary, transform every drop of bitterness which they swallow into a feeling of vengeance, which they ruminate on for some time

and hatch with cruel patience, to launch it against you when least you expect it.

I may suppose you to be patient and good, to be an optimist in your philosophy ; you will be deaf to the most mellifluous insinuations, you will say *Thank you* when your foot is trodden on, and *Thank you* for the rhubarb lozenge which will be offered you—in short, you will take the points from all the darts launched against you ; but there will come a day in which patience, goodness, philosophy, will be scattered to the wind, and you, with so much repressed wrath, will burst out all at once, and placing yourself before your wife, will say :

“ There must be an end to all this ; it must be either I or her ! ”

The proverbs of all European lan-

guages, the satires of the poets, the wit of dramatists, have always agreed in compassionating the sons-in-law, and hurling darts against the mothers-in-law. This experience of many centuries has taught us that a good mother-in-law is very rare, and that in marriage she is an element most pregnant with danger, most fruitful in disaster.

From all this we ought to learn two things :

1st. Before taking a wife to study the character of the future mother-in-law well, and to try and discover whether we shall find in her an angel or a harpy, an ally or an enemy.

2d. According to the result of our psychological inquiry we ought to declare most decidedly that we will

not live with the family of the wife, nor take her mother into our house. If the chosen one of our heart really loves us she will consider this decision of ours quite just, and will help us to gain the victory if a battle there must be.

In your own case do not pass it over, do not cede a hand's breadth of land; keep firm in your intention, being quite convinced that by so doing you will make your own happiness, that of your wife, and of the new family. Between mother-in-law and son-in-law there ought to be affection and respect; a current of benevolent, delicate, and gentle sentiment ought to pass between them, but at a distance, a most respectful distance; so that no sparks, shocks,

much less lightning flashes, may appear. Affection, not intimacy; respect, not subjection.

* * *

But the complications do not finish with the problem of the mother-in-law. There is the other problem which arises when the candidate for marriage has lost his first wife, or the woman her first husband, or both of them their first partners, with or without children on one side or on both sides.

The possible combinations are these :

Widow and widower	{	without children.
	{	with children {
		of the man.
		of the woman.
		of both.
Widower . . .	{	without children.
	{	with children.
Widow . . .	{	without children.
	{	with children.

These various combinations are so many algebraical formulæ in which one may find snares, dangers to happiness, and rancour without end.

If you are a widower and you marry a widow, and neither of you have children, no danger hangs over you. Liberty on both sides, no right nor pretext for intervention ; marriage presents itself almost in the guise of an union between two young people.

You may indeed incur the danger of your wife making comparisons, and these not to your advantage. An old proverb says, *Comparisons are odious*, but I should like to make a correction and add that for him to whom they are unfavourable they are odious, but flattering to him who gains by them. Perhaps you may

excel your predecessor, and your companion will be happy to find it so.

In any case, if you have your weak side inquire about the public and private virtues of the first husband, and put the results into the balance which must weigh the pros and cons of the marriage.

A widow and a widower may both have children, or one only may have them. The dangers in these cases are very different.

It is better for the wife to have them, for if the husband really loves her he will also love her children; and besides, being a man, he is less at home, and paternity is always an episode in his life and not the whole life, as maternity is with the

woman. Then if the man has the good fortune not to have children he will often end by loving his wife's as much as though they were his own.

In the case of there being children on both sides the balance may prove of advantage, because it is equal in weight and measure, and the two married people have cause to reproach themselves and to suffer for the same things.

The worst case is that of a widower with children to whose number the new wife adds; he must be an angel, his wife and children angels also, if no civil war breaks out in his house. Think of it well, think a hundred times. Do not complicate the marriage, already fraught

with so many dangers, by imprudence and temerity.

In marriages between a widow and a widower the greatest danger arises from the children, who fear or see their future threatened, and who in their love for their lost parent believe the new marriage to be an outrage to the memory of the dear one.

It is in these cases that we see all that a man has of venom and baseness come up and soil and cover everything with defilement and poison; all the brutal possibilities of human egotism covered, it may be, with varnish but still the skeleton underlying every thought and feeling.

* *

Only one of the engaged persons may be widow or widower, and it is

greatly to the honour of women that more men marry a second time than women. Man often finds more happiness in marriage than she does, while she is more faithful to the memory of the departed, and thinks more of her children than herself.

How many women I have known who, being left widows quite young, have sacrificed themselves, together with the need of loving and being loved, to their children, often to one alone; proud of their sacrifice, unconquerable against all temptations and against all the power of the most legitimate passions.

Do children know how to value this heroism hidden in the bosom of so many families? Do they understand that there is more courage

required in this struggle of months and years than one day's assault of a battery in battle?

Very rarely do they know it, for even the best of children do not return a hundredth part of the love they have received from their parents, and especially from their mother.

Is happiness more easily to be found in the union of a widower and a young woman, or in that of a widow and a celibate?

The answer is difficult, for the problem is too vague, and individual qualities weigh too heavily in the balance, gradually modifying the surroundings, the affections now ward-

ing off dangers, now increasing them infinitely.

If other conditions be favourable the widow is generally an excellent wife for many reasons: She has lost many illusions, but has learned to know and excuse the egotism of man. Sometimes she will have been obliged to beg her first husband's pardon for some accession of jealousy or caprice; and as a woman always occupies herself in everything more with other people's happiness than her own, she wishes to give her second husband perfect bliss, and often and willingly succeeds. If she cannot offer her companion the virginal flower (which after all is more a myth than a real jewel) she can give him all the treasures

of amorous experience, that is often worth more than a hundred virginities.

On the other hand the widower who marries a young woman has the great advantage of her not being able to make any odious comparisons, and he also brings precious gems to the new home which an unmarried man does not know or possess. He has learned to know all the little weaknesses and great virtues of woman, he has learned to become less egotistical, to think of others more than himself, and as separate from himself, and he generally is an excellent husband.

In all intricate problems, in all the fatal confusions which present them-

selves in the marriage between widows and widowers, between widows, widowers, and celibates, the anchor of safety which saves from shipwreck is always the heart. When there is great love, and it is shared by two, who join hands forever, every difficulty is cleared away, and concord ends by hoisting its banner over the new house. The most ferocious hatred is conquered by generosity, by the indulgence of one who loves much, and after a short battle of the opposing forces love scatters its flowers and blessing over the new nest. Love is the strength of strengths, which surpasses all others, and in this case it is omnipotent, so that when it exists in all its proper energy on one side only, it absorbs

all the minor energies, and on the fields threatened with hail and lightning the sun shines through the last drops of the beneficent rain, and the rainbow hangs its multicoloured bridge in the sky, drawing enemies nearer and making them allies.

Of all the accidents which we may meet on the threshold of matrimony one of the most common is the stoppage of the way by someone who exclaims: "Halt! there is no passage here."

You are a minor, or your loved one is, or the person who has the right to speak does not find your choice to his taste, and shuts the door of the temple you wish to enter

in your face, securing it with many chains. Civil war is declared, and it is to be seen who *can* and *ought* to gain the victory.

This *can* and *ought* are not synonymous terms, because the parents on one side or the other *can* withhold their consent to your union, but many times they are in the wrong, and ought not to refuse to sanction the marriage.

As regards two lovers, if their love is sincere, if in their secret and confidential dialogues they have sworn the everlasting *yes* to each other, if they have nearly conjugated half of the verb to love, they believe that they have every right in the world to become husband and wife; and when they have tried all fair means

to bend the will of the tyrant or tyrants they run away together, secretly, hoping that once the deed is done it will sooner or later receive the consent of those opposing it. Sometimes, however, the wandering sheep are discovered before the deed is consummated, and are re-conducted with many reproaches to their respective folds. In more serious cases spectres of single or double suicide, asphyxiation, poison, or the revolver may appear.

Should anyone find himself in such case meditating death, and have time to cast a look on these pages, let him leave the charcoal, the poison of the druggist, and the revolver of the armourer. Life is a good and beautiful thing that must be guarded with

love, caressed with tenderness, and if love ought to be the bridegroom of the marriage, reason and good sense ought always to be present as witnesses.

If with a stroke of a magic wand one could raise all those who have committed self-destruction to life again, after having dressed their wounds, they would take up life gaily, and even another love affair.

Parents always have the duty and the right of speaking, protesting, and counselling, nay, even of interposing a *veto*, if they see their children's future endangered when they have chosen 'love as arbitrator, but have forgotten to call good sense and reason as witnesses.

If you *will* marry an abject crea-

ture who will dishonour your name and the name of the family to which you belong, and of whom after a few months of warm passion you yourself will be ashamed; if you *will* marry a woman suffering from tuberculous disease, or one of a consumptive family, or where madness is present; if you *will* increase the sad patrimony of proletaries and the unemployed, having neither present nor future resources; if in one way or another you throw yourself with closed eyes head foremost into a bottomless abyss only to satisfy carnal excitement which you may call passion, but which is only the desire of the flesh—father and mother have full right to oppose your ruin with all possible means; and even if they

should not succeed they will have done their duty. If the means they take succeed you will later on thank them with a warm gratitude.

In all these cases I allow you to combat, to weep, even tear out some of your hair; but the tears over, the muscles tired, gather up the hair you have torn out and present it to your fair one, telling her to keep it until your return as a pledge of your *eternal faith*; for you ought to leave, and that instantly, even on foot, even asking money of the tyrannical parents or of some compassionate friend. Travel in far countries, and who knows if on your return you will not find a neat little packet tied with rose-coloured ribbon—your letters, your hair, and perhaps the an-

nouncement of the marriage of your old *fiancée*.

If your love, instead, has known how to resist the long absence, if it has strengthened and grown, who knows if the hard parents will not be moved to pity and try to make an adjustment, provided, however, that there be no consumption, madness, or other calamities to dissuade you from marriage in an absolute and decided way. Better that you should die than sow death broadcast in future generations.

There are some cases, however, in which the wrong is not yours, but is theirs who unreasonably and tyrannically oppose your happiness from

prejudices of rank, avidity of money, or some caprice or other. If you are a count or marquis and love a girl of good family without a coat of arms, or if you are very rich and wish to marry an educated girl of angelic character, but who is not rich—in these and similar cases seek the help of your mother, who is nearly always more compassionate than your father, or ask counsel and help from some intimate friend, from one of the few who knows your heart like a book, and has never flattered you.

In these domestic contests it is very rare for right and reason to be on one side only; there is a little on this side and a little on that; your hands are too unsteady to hold the balance of justice steadily, and weigh

with precision the *pro* and the *con*. Your mother, instead, who loves you as no one else can (not even your lover), and your friend who knows you well, see things from a dispassionate and calm point of view, and will judge justly whether you are right or wrong; and if you are neither mad nor a fool you will end by believing those who love you and desire your good; and, as the case may be, stand firm and you will win. The ancient Greek appealed against Philip, the modern miller appeals against Berlin, and both were right against Philip and against Frederick the Great. Your mother and friend will appeal to you not to fast entirely from love, but to be a little less hungry, and who knows but that they

will end in being right against that king of kings Love—stronger than the father of Alexander the Great, greater than Frederick the Great.

If they really love you, and are persons of good sense, they will say neither *No!* nor *Never!* to you, but will content themselves by saying, Have a little patience; wait.

Time is the chief and capable corrector of the proof sheets of the sketches of love, as also the policy of Fabius the temporizer, who knew how to gain so many wars by skirmishes and battles.

The stone of comparison enables us to distinguish gold from ignoble metal; time teaches us to separate with certainty true love from the desire of the flesh, from the fussy

exactions of self-love and all that is plated. And perhaps, besides your mother and friend, you will listen to the long experience of him who writes, and will hear his voice, which says to you, cries to you, supplicates you :

Let time take its course, ever and always.

CHAPTER IX.

HELL.

I AM sitting in a restaurant in the town of —, at the seaside. It is the height of the bathing season, the carnival of salt and fresh water, and the whole world is forgetting the labour and unpleasantnesses of city life for a few weeks.

I am waiting for my breakfast, seated at a table just outside the house, under an arbour of vines and convolvulus. The sea breeze reaches me, plays with my tablecloth and sports with my hair, uniting itself to the perfume of flowers which peep

up, red, white, and violet, happy also in the midst of all the sunshine, greenery, and freshness.

Nearly all the tables, scattered about under the arbours or in the shade of the trees, are surrounded by happy people who have just taken their baths, fresh, with disordered hair, hungry and merry. Even human life has its good quarters of an hour.

Near me I see a teacher to whom two girls of about ten and twelve have been intrusted, and who, faithful to her trust, is giving them a noisy lesson in morality and gallantry, whilst she eats and drinks as if she were starving. I cannot imagine how she does it, but she manages not to interrupt her educational discourse, whilst she never ceases to eat and

drink. The pupils do not listen to her, but look at each other, sily laughing at the inexhaustible conversation of their instructress. A little further off there are three young fellows who, having passed their examinations well, have been rewarded by a visit to the seaside. They are laughing, noisy, and giddy with youth, thoughtless, envying no living soul. One of them has just finished his breakfast, and in order to pay his bill of one franc fifty centimes he brings out a red bank-note of a hundred francs, and offers it to the waiter with great pride, and in such a way that everyone can see it. It is the first he has ever had, and already that morning he has offered it at the coffeehouse

to pay fifteen centimes, and at the baths to pay for his ticket of fifty centimes. No one would change it, and even the waiter says he has no change; and the young fellow is happy, for he will be able to display it a fourth, a fifth, and even a sixth time.

Facing me a whole family of some seven or eight persons are eating merrily, and the children, in a chromatic scale of bright colours and different heights, range from two to fifteen years. Each one is giving utterance to its joy, clambering up and down the chairs, playing with a little dog to which they give the tid-bits on their plates. The father is red, stout, and in his shirt sleeves; he looks smilingly at his blond companion,

reading in her smile the reflection of all that lisping chatter, laughter, and folly which surround them.

All these people, differing in age, condition, and intellect, unite in the same merriment, which they seem to have drawn from the sea, the father of planetary life, the dispenser of spirit and energy; and all the while the golden rays of the sun shine through the vine leaves, the ivy, and convolvulus, painting with the shade and penumbra of the leaves the tablecloth, the dresses of the women, and the rosy faces of the children, throwing patches, half shades, and glistening spots on the garden sand.

I, too, a solitary observer, enjoyed all the bright sunshine and the happiness of the people, but forgot that I

had only looked to the right and straight before me; I turned calmly to the left, sure of finding there another scene of joy and brightness.

On the contrary, the picture was very different.

At a table just as clean and white as the others, played on capriciously by light and shade, two persons were sitting, a man and a woman.

He was about thirty, she forty-five. He was handsome, robust, with manly energy; she lame, fat, and hunch-backed. There ought to have been a neck, but there was none to be seen, for the heavy head appeared to have been put on the chest awry; and all the cruel artifices resorted to for hiding the hump behind seemed

made on purpose to produce another in front. Even her features were ugly, and the ill-made hands were laden with rings. Large earrings were in her ears, and a colossal locket surrounded by diamonds, inclosing the man's portrait, was hanging in front. Husband and wife, no doubt.

She was eating, but could not have known the flavour of the food, for the mouthful went round and round between her teeth, whilst another piece on the fork was waiting in vain for its turn to enter the mouth. That poor deformed being did not cry, that is, no tears fell on her cheeks, but she blew her nose every now and then, and the eyes were moist and sad. She placed the

fork automatically from time to time on the plate, with the mouthful still on it, and gazed at the man lovingly, tenderly, waiting, imploring for a look.

But the look never came. With one hand he hastily conveyed the food to his mouth, and with the other held a newspaper, which he was reading with pretended interest, so as not to have the silence interrupted. He did not shed tears nor blow his nose, but he frowned, and he was also suffering one of those intense and hidden agonies to which one does not confess, but which furrow the soul like harrows of steel.

I did not remove my eyes again from that dumb and agonizing scene.

After a long interval she said to

him, timidly, hesitatingly, almost as if committing a crime :

“Will you take anything else?”

He started as if the voice had struck him like a blow in the face ; he turned to her and twisted his mouth like one seized with a sudden and irresistible disgust.

“No, I want nothing more.”

The *No* was pronounced angrily and with scorn ; it was, and must have been, a blow to her to whom it was addressed. He looked at her a long time, a look full of hatred, remorse, and disgust. It seemed as if he were passing in review all his companion's ugliness, and as if until that moment he had never seen it so clearly : those wrinkles, that gray hair, that hump, the deformed neck,

those arms which looked like hams in sacks, and then those rings and jewels which seemed to jeer at the white, flabby flesh with their brightness. The deformity, the grotesque violation of good taste, suddenly struck that handsome and robust man, for he had sold youth and manhood to an unfortunate woman who had believed it possible to still love and be loved.

The two had plunged into the waves of the sea a little before; they had drunk of the sun's rays too, but neither sea nor sun had been able to give happiness to these unfortunate creatures who had bartered carnal pleasures for gold, who had changed sacred love to a vile prostitution of flesh and banknotes.

She had already passed the meridian of her second youth ; he was still young.

She was undressing. He was already in bed, and followed the progressive unclothing of that body with an anxious curiosity, that body once so active, so handsome and fascinating, now all submerged in the high waters of an invading corpulence.

He wished to hide his head under the counterpane, and did so, but a morbid curiosity made him put out his head again directly, and he looked.

She had read in her glass only too well the ruin of her form, and had always sought to undress alone ; but this time she was obliged to do it before his eyes. She ingeniously hid the regions which had most suffered

wreck, and with a remnant of coquetry kept uncovered her shoulders, the *ultimum moriens* in the woman's body ; but diffident of herself, and fearful of those looks which seemed to pierce her through, her last garment fell from her hands to her feet, and the disasters of the wreck suddenly appeared, standing out cruelly, without pity for her or for him.

She uttered a cry and stooped down to cover herself. . .

He, egotistical, pitiless, forgot all the delights that this body once so fragrant of youth and beauty had given him, and exclaimed, throwing the words in her face :

“At a certain age I think a little more modesty is demanded.”

From that moment, from that even-

ing, the two were enemies, two galley slaves bound by the same chain.

She was reclining, rather than seated, on the sofa, with small and large cushions, which allowed her to change the frame of which she was the picture. She was smoking a cigarette, and had a French novel on her knee that could not have interested her very much, for at that moment she yawned. The yawn was cut short, or rather interrupted, by the sudden opening of the sitting-room door ; no one ever entered the room in that way but him. This time it was more like him than usual : always a husband, now an angry one.

He entered with his hat on his head,

his stick in his hand, as if he were just going out or had just come in. The latter was the case. On returning from his walk a large envelope had been put into his hand in the anteroom. It contained a dressmaker's bill, the third or fourth he had received in a few months. The total was very high, higher than usual, and he came into the room with the bill in his hand to make a scene.

"Come, now, come, now, my lady, when shall we finish with these accounts?"

She made no answer, but continued to smoke, only growing a little red in the face.

"It seems that my lady believes herself to be a millionaire; this is the third bill that I have had to

pay in little more than four months. But what game are we playing, my lady?"

And *my lady*, throwing the end of her cigarette on a Japanese tray, stretched out her voluptuous limbs, and showed, as if by chance, a fairy-like foot and a leg for a sculptor. More than once already had the disclosure of such a picture, sacred to love, warded off a heavy storm. Now, however, neither foot nor leg could disarm her husband, who had thrown his stick on a chair, but kept on his hat, to increase the violence of his words and to give authority to his threats. In the meantime he rumbled and then folded the innocent paper with alternate convulsive movements.

“I shall not pay this bill; you must pay it yourself. You have jewels (given by me, of course); put them in pawn. You will then learn not to play the princess with other people's money.”

The little foot and leg retired under the dress, ashamed of their defeat, and at last the lady opened her mouth too:

“I think you can hardly expect me to cut a sorry figure in society.”

“But what society? Society of Egypt! Many ladies who are more truly ladies than you don't spend half what you do. I have inquired and know very well.”

“Yes, your Fifi told you, your Fifi, for whom you pay much larger bills than you do for your wife.”

Never had his wife uttered the name of the stage dancer until that moment, and he had believed her to be quite ignorant of his amours. He reddened up to his hair, frowned, and shook himself as if he had been stung by a viper, and the conversation became embittered even to brutality.

“Ah! jealous, and impertinent too! It seems to me that when one has not brought a halfpenny of dowry there ought to be a little more modesty and economy.”

“Good, very good, sir! I have brought youth and beauty as a dowry, and a dowry besides; yes, you insolent man, a good dowry, a large sum which was lost in the failure of the Bank of Turin. And

is that my fault? And you, what have you brought me? A bald head, false teeth, and a body eaten through with vice—a fine patrimony, truly.”

“Ah, you had a dowry, had you? I have never seen it; the only treasure I have seen is the gold with which your teeth are stopped. Sell that and pay the dressmaker’s bill with it.”

The bill flew in the air and fell at the woman’s feet.

The husband went out of the room, slamming the door so loudly as to make the little Japanese figures and the other bric-a-brac on the table tremble. And the wife, lighting a fresh cigarette, set to, with all the force of her intellect, to invent some revenge worthy of the insult received.

She was alone in her boudoir, seated before a writing table of ebony inlaid with ivory. She wrote rapidly and smiled to herself, as one smiles when one is writing to one beloved, and saying a saucy thing flavoured with much tenderness.

Nothing was heard in the room but the soft and rhythmical scratching of the steel pen on the paper. She was so intent on what she was writing that she had not heard someone raise the *portière*, enter the room, and stand before her.

That someone was not the person to whom she was writing, for raising her graceful head for a moment as if to seek an adjective more merrily saucy to put with the others, she saw her husband, whom she be-

lieved was out, standing before her.

She uttered a startled cry, and unconsciously covered the paper she was writing on with her right hand.

“Ah, is it you? How you frightened me!”

“Another time I will have myself announced.”

These words were said without anger, and with a serene calmness; but a diabolic irony played round the mouth.

The smile gradually converted itself to a real laugh, to which the nodding head seemed to beat time.

“Perhaps you were writing to Count B. Who can write the better, you or he? His letters are pretty, very pretty! How much passion—

no, passion is not a fit word, it is too flattering; let us say *sensuality, lasciviousness, debauchery*. Which of these words do you find most suitable?"

The lady had become white as death. The pen fell from her hand and made a large blot on the elegant paper.

But the husband, continuing to laugh, had approached her, and having drawn a chair to the writing table, stroked her hair lovingly.

"You were afraid; but of what? You think, perhaps, that I am come to make a scene, or perhaps to kill you, and then myself after. No, no; I only like double suicides on the stage or in novels, provided the author of the book or the drama

has talent. But here, why stain this beautiful Persian carpet with your blood, why scatter mine over the elegant paper you were covering with your words of love? It would really be a pity, a crime, and above all a folly. I am come to make a compact," and he laid a long kiss on the little fair curls at her neck.

It seemed to the lady as if that kiss burnt her like a red-hot iron.

She withdrew her head and gazed at her husband with glassy eyes, petrified with astonishment.

No, he had not really the look of an assassin. He was calm, cheerful, like a good-tempered fellow who was playing an innocent joke, a very innocent one.

"Give me a cigarette. The air

is heavy with the odour of your cigarettes! They must be very good ones. Probably Count B. brought them for you from Constantinople?" He did not wait for her to give it to him, but took one himself from a bronze bowl and lighted it. "I told you, then, that I was come to make a compact with you, a compact of purchase and sale, in which we shall both gain something. Look!"

And here the husband took out of the pocket of his greatcoat a perfumed packet of letters tied with a golden cord.

"I have a treasure here! the entire and complete collection of all the letters the count has written you. Not one is missing! The lady's maid you dismissed last week made me a present

of them, gave them to me for nothing. There are a hundred and thirty, written in three months! How much will you give me for this treasure?"

The lady, being suddenly reassured that her husband's intentions were not homicidal, looked at him with a gaze full of contempt and cruelty. She no longer felt fear or remorse. She could have wished at that moment that the letters might have been not from one lover only, but from ten, a hundred, and that each one could strike him and spit in his face. She began to laugh too.

"Bravo! capital! you are a man of spirit. Give me a kiss!"

And the kiss was given, a faithful copy of the one that Judas gave Christ nearly twenty centuries ago.

"I will give you a thousand francs!"

"Oh! oh! oh!"

And here followed a long and loud laugh.

"A thousand francs! a thousand francs! What are you thinking of? I want ten thousand francs, not a penny more or less. If not, I will give them to your father for nothing, only reserving two or three of the most lascivious to publish in the papers. Do you agree?"

"Give them to him if you will. I shall say tha' you wrote them, that they are false. My father esteems me highly."

"Um! Your father is not a fool, and the writing of the count is not forged. I want ten thousand francs!"

"I will give you five."

"No; it is too little. I must pay Nina's milliner's bill, and I want to go to Paris."

"I will give you six."

"No, ten. Not a penny more or less."

"Very well; I will give you ten thousand francs. Give me the letters. Swear that they are all here!"

"Look at the dates. They are really all here. They are numbered too by the count, with red ink, perhaps with his blood."

And here there was a loud laugh.

"When you bring me the ten thousand francs I will give you the letters, not before."

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The compact was made, the letters were returned, the sum was paid.

The husband paid Nina's milliner's

CHAPTER X.

PURGATORY.

BUT few marriages are a hell, and fewer still enjoy the highest beatitudes of heaven ; the most stand half-way between the two—that is, in purgatory. There they live without redemption, which means without any hope of mounting to heaven ; but neither have they any fear of being hurled down among the fallen angels. After a more or less lengthy honeymoon they descend gradually to earth, now walking amongst nettles and thorns, now amongst the flowering

beds of the garden, to remain there till death.

To describe all the forms and accidents of this conjugal purgatory would be to exhaust the human universe. It is enough for me to present some scenes taken from life, so that you can judge of the rest from these examples.

*

It is eight o'clock in the morning ; he has been awake for some time ; she is sleeping soundly and sweetly.

He had been quiet and silent for more than an hour, reading the paper, smoking a cigarette, looking at his wife with the fond hope that she may wake up of herself, but in vain.

Then he coughed several times, used his handkerchief without needing it, shook the bed, but in vain.

The waiting had become impatience; impatience had changed to a troublesome, insupportable agitation.

Then he gave her a sweet, light little kiss on her lips. She woke with a start and stared at him—he who had expected a smile or an answer on a par with the question.

“How you frightened me! Why did you wake me so suddenly?”

“I thought my kiss would have pleased you, and hoped to wake you gradually without giving you a shock.”

“But you know—you know very well that for some time past waking me in that way has hurt me. It

gives me palpitation of the heart, and then I feel ill all day."

"I have been awake since six o'clock, and have had the patience to wait two hours for you to wake; you have slept nine hours."

"And if I wish to sleep ten what have you to say against it? Do you not remember that I worked like a dog yesterday, that I had to attend to the house linen, put the drawing room in order, and then went round to all the shops to find a good flannel for your vests? You ruin my health, and will give me disease of the heart by your nasty habit of waking me up so suddenly."

"And how ought I to wake you? Teach me."

“If I could teach you to have a little more consideration, if I could cure you of your egotism, I would willingly do so; you only think of yourself.”

The tone of the conversation on her part, at first slightly irritated, had become angry, rancorous, and full of suppressed bitterness.

He felt it, but still hoped for a reconciliation.

He tried to feel her heart.

“Let me see if you really have palpitation of the heart.”

She turned her back on him angrily.

“Let me alone; after having done me harm you now want to joke. I tell you you will finish by killing me!”

He turned away too, muttering

under his breath and thinking sad thoughts of that chemical combination called marriage.

“Listen, dear ; I should like to dine an hour earlier to-day.”

“And why?”

“Because I eat nothing at breakfast and have a poet’s hunger.”

“I, on the contrary, have none at all. I eat too much.”

“But besides my appetite, I have another reason for wishing to dine earlier. Do you know, I have promised my oldest and best friend, Giovanni, to meet him at the station on his way to Rome?”

“Who knows that it is not a lady instead?”

“Come with me to the station and convince yourself.”

“Heaven defend me! I am not jealous.”

“A little! You are jealous six days in the week and seven times every day. You are always so and always in the wrong.”

“But I tell you I believe you; I was only joking.”

“Very well, then, we will dine at five instead of six.”

“Impossible! Annina has brought home such a tough fowl that it will require all the cooking in the world to have it ready by seven.”

“But I can do without the fowl!”

“But there is nothing else! Go another time to meet Giovanni—when he returns from Rome, for instance.”

"He will not be returning by the same route. I know he has to go back by Civita Vecchia and Genoa."

"Well, anyhow, we cannot dine at five!"

"Ah! it is enough that I should ask a thing for you to find a thousand and one difficulties to prevent you doing what I want. It has been so ever since we were married, and will be to the end."

"And you will always be that obstinate and infallible man who wishes to command in housekeeping where the woman ought to be mistress."

"Go on, go on! Just because one wants dinner at five instead of at six you have your usual reproaches for me. I know them by heart already."

"Yet it does not appear so, for you

are incorrigible and will have what you want at any cost, even if your wife's or children's health has to suffer, or even if the sky fall."

"Yes, yes, you are right ; a tough fowl will kill you. For Heaven's sake do not let us have such pettiness."

"But it is you who are petty, thanks for the compliment ; if I am petty you are egotistical, and ought not to have married."

"And you ought not to have had a husband, you chatterer, you intolerable scold !"

"Go on. Haven't you some more gentle, nice adjectives ; they are so well suited to your delicate mouth ?"

"Yes, I have a good many left ; you are foolish and have no common sense ;

you make a rope out of a thread of silk, and in everything you find a pretext to make scenes and torment me, and scatter gall on all you touch. Yes, you must be suffering from the liver. Call in the doctor, you must have the jaundice."

"It is you who have the jaundice, and to show you that you are the most petty of the two I will be silent and go."

"And I will go too, and will dine neither at five nor six, but at the hotel. At least I shall not hear your ugly and impertinent voice there, your chatter without sense, and I shall have an hour's rest from the infinite sweetnesses you scatter over the time when we are obliged to be together."

He is director of some large works. He is early at his desk, for it is Saturday and he must balance the accounts of the week and pay the work people. He is in an exceedingly bad temper, for he has discovered that the cashier is not honest, that his chief superintendent is ignorant, and that a good many customers have sent in complaints of the bad quality of the goods despatched from the factory. He has both arms on the writing table, his head is between his hands, and he looks mechanically at a row of figures before him without reading them.

She, on the contrary, is in the best of tempers, for she feels well, and when she was dressing her hair the glass told her how handsome she was,

very handsome ; and then her little boy on waking a little before had sat up in his cradle and, smiling, had said *Mamma* for the first time.

She caught him up in delight in his little white night-dress, just as he was, and ran to her husband's office, opened the door without knocking or waiting to know if anyone was there, and rushed in hastily and happily.

He had hardly time to raise his eyes before she was at the writing table, and had placed the child on a bundle of papers, and said in an agitated voice :

“Give papa a kiss.”

Papa loved the little fellow very much and the mother exceedingly ; but at that moment he hated all and everything, even himself. What

would he have given at that moment not to be unkind; what would he have done not to have had his wife and child there to make him hurt them!

How many fierce, dumb, and invisible struggles are carried on in a man's brain within a few seconds.

He said nothing, but put his mouth quickly to the child's.

"Yes, yes; bravo; give me a kiss and then go away directly, for I am busy—I have a devil in every hair and a thousand anxieties in my mind . . . yes . . . yes, so . . . good-by, good-by."

And he almost pushed away mother and child with his two nervous, angry, almost threatening hands. The poor mother had not expected such a re-

ception, and could not reconcile herself to it.

“Do you know that Carlino has just said *Mamma* for the first time, really, just now when he woke?”

The father was silent and fretted, angry with himself because he could not and did not know how to call up a single affectionate word to his lips or a sole caress to his hands; all was dark before him, and everything so bitter that absinthe would have seemed honey to him.

And to be obliged to be so hard with that touching picture before him! Oh, why had that woman come at such a moment? Why had he not locked himself in his office?

The mother could not give in. She drew her lips to his scowling

forehead, but he did not draw down those lips to his; he simply touched her cheek coldly. That kiss was an insult; he was ice; he was brutal.

She felt a lump in her throat, which broke into a sob.

"Yes, yes, let us go away. We will not come again to trouble you."

He got up hurriedly and went to the window, but did not open it. He put his hands through his hair and exclaimed aloud:

"Bless the women! they never understand anything; they come into the office, interrupt one's work, and oblige one to be harsh to those one loves best. And yet they pretend to be our equals."

He continued his panegyric on women alone, for mother and child had

disappeared, both crying, the mother mortally offended by the double blow—the one to the wife's heart, the other to the mother's. The child screamed, frightened at the cruel scene which he appeared to feel, if he did not understand.

Sobs and cries lasted some time, and were heard through the wall in the office, making a savage harmony with the bursts of impatience of the angry director of the factory.

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* * *

“Do you know, dear, the Marquis of Bellavista came into our box at the theatre yesterday evening?”

“What did he want? I did not know he was in Florence.”

“Neither did I.”

“Um!”

“I thought he was still in Naples ; but he told me he was staying a day or two in Florence on his way to the races at Milan, and seeing me in the box, he came up to shake hands with me.”

“I hope you were rude to him, so that he will not be tempted to come and see you a second time.”

“Rude, no ! but cold. You can ask your mother, who was present at the time.”

“I can’t believe that you had not seen him before during the day, when you were out, or perhaps here at home. You tell me now that you have seen him at the theatre because a hundred others might tell me, and you wished to forestall them.”

"But this is a gratuitous insult, unjust, cruel! I do not think I have ever given you reason to doubt my loyalty."

"I have not the slightest suspicion of any other man who may pay you attention, but with the marquis it is quite a different thing. Before you married me he was deeply in love with you, and you with him; and the affair went a good way, for you were engaged to each other. It was only your father who broke off the engagement at the last moment because he heard the worst accounts of the character of his future son-in-law and of his disreputable conduct. First love always leaves deep impressions."

"No, my love, had I really loved

the marquis I should not have married anyone else, nor should I have believed the accusations they cast at him. I should have waited until I was mistress of myself, and not have given my hand to another."

"And how long was the marquis in the box?"

"About an hour."

"Very good, only an hour! Too short a time for a love appointment, and too long for a complimentary visit."

"But I could not send him away."

"When a woman desires it she can always make a man understand that his visit is inopportune, inconvenient, and that he must shorten it if possible."

"You teach me how I can do so."

“And then you chatted over your old love, and the cruel rupture of your separation.”

“We only spoke of music and theatres.”

“We may believe that. But I am going out to see if I can discover whether the marquis is still in Florence, and how long he intends to stay. And in the meantime, if he is barefaced enough to call here, I beg you will not receive him. This I demand and desire.”

“No command is necessary ; I know my duty.”

“Not always. A visit of an hour in the box of a woman to whom the man was once engaged is an offence to her husband.”

She, who was completely innocent,

felt herself really offended by all the suspicions of her husband, and began to beat her foot on the carpet and to torture a volume of Coppée lying on the table with a paper knife.

From anger and from opposition to the unmerited offence she had a firm idea that the Marquis of Bellavista would never have been so jealous, so foolishly jealous. Libertines know the hearts of women a little better.

The husband went out of the house without a farewell word to his wife. He became a spy on the marquis, and followed his steps from café to café, at the club, amongst friends, divining his projects, and tormenting himself in a hundred and one ways, one more absurd than the other.

“Will you allow me, dear, to make an observation?”

The question is asked by a man still in bed, and is addressed to his wife, who is near him under the same sheet, and is still sleepy.

“About what?”

“About the French song you sang yesterday at the countess’s.”

“And what have you to say about it?”

“That you pronounced the *u* very badly, just as if it were *ou*.”

“And have you nothing else to criticise?”

“No. Now do not be angry; if your husband does not tell you of these things——”

“Bravo, capital, and a thousand thanks; above all, let me congratulate

you on the time you have selected for correcting my errors in French pronunciation. Instead of wishing me good-morning with a kiss, a caress, or a loving word the French professor gives me a lesson in language. Do you give it to me gratuitously, or what do you charge for it?"

"There you are, up on your high horse in a moment, and for such a trifle. You are a Tuscan and the *u* is hard and difficult for those lips of yours, which distil milk and honey; but another time be careful. People will say you do not know French."

"But what French! I ask you if in the excitement of the music, or the torrent of notes, there is anyone who would notice if one said *u* or *ou*. And I do not speak of a vowel

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"You certainly sing well, but remember that in good society applause is bestowed upon all, especially upon handsome women."

"Yes, but only to those who know how to pronounce the *u*."

"Shall I tell you all, since you are determined to take offence at the slightest observation which I make?"

"Yes, tell me."

"Well, the Duke of St. Etienne whilst they so loudly applauded you bent forward to his cousin and said: '*Oui, elle chanté très-bien, mais elle a le timbre de la voix un peu dour.*' And the amiable little cousin covered her face to hide her Homeric laugh."

"*Dur* or *dour*, I must get up an hour earlier, or else you will drive me mad. My day will be a happy one,

and I shall have you to thank for it. A thousand thanks, you master of French !”

To know the reason of this sudden burst of anger, why from being slightly keen the conversation became suddenly bitter, and the notes from sharp became acute, you must understand that the cousin of the duke was, from position, youth, and beauty, the official rival of the lady who pronounced *u* as *ou*.

They are both seated at the table with their four children, their ages ranging from five to twelve years. She, the mother, is helping them all. He is watching the distribution of a delicious custard. From time to time

he frowns, and shakes his head in sign of disapprobation.

And this pantomime continued so long that at last she became aware of it, and in her turn looked at him crossly and put down the spoon.

"What is the matter? Some new criticism?"

"Yes, but it's no new subject of complaint. For some time past I have noticed the thing every day at breakfast, dinner, and supper, and if I have not given utterance to my dislike, it has been to avoid any unpleasantness; but to-day it seems as if I were losing patience."

"Lose it; I will pick it up."

"You might have a little more consideration, especially when you usurp the prerogative of a god and dis-

tribute good and evil with such authority."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you always serve the boys first and the girls after, whilst in all ages and countries ladies are served first."

She began to laugh heartily.

"But I see no ladies here, only children, who have no sex in my eyes, for I love them all equally. To-day, and for several days past, I have helped Cecchino and Pietro first because they are near me. When Maria was in Cecchino's place I helped her first. What! ought we to teach children, in their earliest age of innocence, etiquette and the laws of society? This seems to me the height of absurdity."

“As to the absurdity of the idea, that is not the question. It is a matter of justice. You always prefer the boys.”

“And you the girls, so we are quits.”

“But look round and read your condemnation in the plates of the children. You not only help the boys first, but you give them more.”

“Of course; they are older!”

“No, no, independently of age you are partial.”

“But when none are the same age?”

“What difference does one or two years make? The difference is in your injustice, your deplorable partiality.”

“Do me the favour of helping them

yourself. It will be one labour the less for me and for you a pleasant occupation, a splendid opportunity to administer justice in the family. From this time forth I will help them no more."

"Neither will I."

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For the honour of the two married people who discoursed so learnedly on distributive justice, it must be remarked that they spoke in German, a language the children did not know. So that for this time at least they had no opportunity of learning that heaven is very far from most families, and that human justice is generally very unjust.

The reader will be grateful to me for not wearying him longer with other sketches taken from real life revealing the matrimonial purgatory. Hell is awful, but it has its dramatic emotions and these offer some compensation for all there is of monstrous, sanguinary, or horrible. Purgatory instead is very small, mean, and deplorably vulgar. There are no ocean storms, but bogs which submerge us inch by inch; no tiger bites, but mosquito stings; no lion's claws, but the puncture of the flea; no delirium or crime, but secret sobs and silent tears; the continual itching of a scab which heals, forms a crust, and is again broken; an exudation of malignant humours which leak out drop by drop from the marrow of the

bones through the tissues, to the skin, and there they remain viscid, fetid, and contagious. This is a true but not very enticing picture of the purgatory of marriage, a hundred times worse than the purgatory of the Catholic Church, which after a longer or shorter time leads to heaven. This other only leads through a long, sorrowful life, to death at the last.

CHAPTER XI.

PARADISE.

THEY had been seated near each other for some time on the same sofa, not in the voluptuous atmosphere of desire, but in a calm and ingenuous admiration of each other.

They had no desires, for all were satisfied, but they were not indifferent nor were they weary, for the light of love shown eternally in their heaven ; twilights of laughing morn or melancholy sundowns, but never night. True faithful love knows no darkness. When the planetary sun sinks in the west there are lighted for true

lovers the many-coloured lamps of an electric beacon, which, like an iridescent rainbow, joins sundown to dawn.

On her knees, as if in a sweet doze, a volume of Musset was lying half open, and her right hand was more than pressed, it was grasped, in his left. She had read several pages of the great poet aloud, as only she knew how to read, pointing those immortal verses with the passionate accent of one who reading loves, and loving reads. At that inspired reading he had been always silent, but low and frequent sighs told her that through those hands closed in such close embrace there crept a tremor of high and perfect happiness. The current of her touch said to him softly:

“Listen, dear, how beautiful it is!”

And his answered hers with a tremor :

“Thank you, dearest!”

Then all at once, without her having said, “I am tired!” or his having said, “That is enough!” the book had fallen on her knees and they gazed into each other’s eyes.

In fact, these two happy beings were nothing but eyes, open, wide open, to drink in all the light that emanated from their souls: eyes moistened with tears which did not fall on their cheeks, but were absorbed as by an invisible sponge which conveyed them to the heart. Had anyone been present he would have heard a double *tic-tac* in unison, the harmony of two notes, one high

and one low, the divine music of two souls who converse without words.

Her eyes were sweet, tender, and very mild ; they appeared as if they were dissolving in the dew of paradise. His eyes lightened, were ardent and fiery, drinking in the paradisaean ambrosia of her pupils.

Tremour of the frame, contraction of clasped hands, and lightning from their eyes accorded harmoniously with the *tic-tac* of two hearts bound together ; the whole an ecstasy of two existences, which are at one in the pores of the skin, the nerves of the soul, the muscles of the will.

Was it voluptuousness ?

No, it was bliss.

Was it lasciviousness ?

No, something less than all those ; only two lives fused into one.

After a sigh from both a spark darted from those eyes ; and from those lips there came at the same moment, as if a signal had been given, these words :

"Oh, how handsome you are !"

"Oh, how lovely you are !"

They had been married for three years, and not the slightest cloud had obscured the heaven of their happiness. When, during the first months, she had drawn a deep sigh and said to him,

"Oh, my Carlo, how happy we are !"

He, as if seized with a mysterious fear, had answered her :

“No, Teresa, do not say so! It seems as if it must bring misfortune. When God sees a man happy he judges him as standing in contravention of human and divine laws, and whispers to him that terrible dictum which one sees promulgated everywhere in England against those who violate regulations: *You will be prosecuted*. Just imagine if instead of one happy person he should find two! The penalty must be doubled.”

She blushed and smiled. She did not believe at all in that form of superstition, but willingly obeyed, and for some time did not say:

“Carlo, how happy we are!”

This did not prevent their being so. One day, however, she repeated the happy exclamation, for which she felt

the real necessity in order to relieve the fulness of her heart.

Carlo closed her mouth with his hand, but this time she resisted, and almost for fun repeated the same words ten times :

" You will see that no harm will come to us."

And, in fact, the most complete bliss continued to shine in the blue heavens of those two happy ones. They were two and they were one ; but sometimes, sighing, they had said :

" Why are we not three ? "

It was he really who had said so ; and she then blushed and hung her head, sighing :

" You are right, Carlo ; our happiness is too great for two alone ;
u

divided among three it would be better."

"But the third, Teresa, ought to be tiny, tiny—so, look," and he opened the palm of his hand to show the length that this third partner in their happiness ought to be.

This discourse, however, did not please Teresa, and after a forced smile she kissed Carlo and gave him a pat on the cheek, and said in a shame-faced way, and with an unsteady voice :

"You know it is not my fault."

"I know it is not the fault of either of us, we love each other so much. But do not worry any more about it ; we can be happy even if we are only two."

And from that day they had never

referred again to the third being, who was to be a span long, and was to share their felicity.

But both of them thought of it constantly. It was not a cloud which covered the sun, but a light mist which dimmed it.

One day when he was in his study busy writing she ran in as if she had something very urgent to say to him ; then instead, when halfway in the room, she stood still.

"What is it, Teresa?"

"I have good and delightful news for you."

"Really?"

She smiled and blushed, and with little timid, hesitating steps, as if she had some fault to confess, she came close to the writing table, embraced

Carlo, and hid her head on his shoulder. She still kept silence and her face was hidden.

In vain he endeavoured to move her away that he might see her face. He thought he guessed, but still feared he might be deceiving himself.

“Is it true, then, really true, my dear, dear Teresa?”

With a sudden courage she took one of his hands and placed it on her heart.

“Listen, Carlo, there are three of us.”

He rose suddenly, agitated, embraced her, and kissed her a hundred times on the eyes, cheeks, hair, mouth, everywhere, interrupting his kisses with sighs of joy.

“Thanks, thanks, my adored one.”

They continued to be happy, and to call themselves so, without fear that God would know it, consider them in contravention, and murmur in their ears :

You will be prosecuted.

They had not seen each other for eight days ! He had been obliged to leave her alone on account of urgent business.

Eight days—that is eight centuries ! He had written eight times, she ten, for on one day which seemed longer than the others she had written three times, in the three different languages she knew.

In the last, written in English in

the evening, she finished with these words: "Why do I not know seven languages? Then I should have written seven times to you to-day, because the same thing said in different languages seems different, and renews my joy in thinking of you. I should like to say I love you in all the languages in the world. . ."

At last he telegraphed his arrival, and she had been an hour at the station, walking up and down by the deserted rails.

She looked at her watch, then at the station clock; it seemed to her as if it must have stopped, so much like centuries did those minutes appear.

With her most pleasant smile she went to one of the officials :

“Is the train from Genoa late?”

“Yes, about ten minutes.”

How cruel those four words were! How she condemned in her heart Italian railways, engine drivers, directors, and shareholders, who by their negligence had inflicted another ten minutes upon her anxious waiting. She drew near the kiosk of newspapers and books, but without looking at anything; she bought flowers, but did not smell them; she kept her eyes turned toward Genoa, strained her ears, bit her lips, but the train came not.

In a moment a thousand fears flashed through her mind—the remembrance of the last collision, the many killed and injured——

She did not dare to go to the same

official. She went to another, timid and full of fears. This time she did not succeed in smiling.

“Is the train from Genoa still late?”

“Yes, ten minutes; it will be here in five minutes now.”

Shortly after a whistle was heard, then a low and heavy vibration of the rails, a great column of smoke appeared, then the heavy wheels rolled under the roof of the station.

She ran from one carriage to another, impatient and anxious; he was not there.

Travellers alighted in crowds. He was not there.

Her heart beat fast, she did not know what to do. She turned her back to the train and walked toward

the station master without knowing what she ought to say, or even could say to him.

But she had no need of him, for she felt herself clasped closely by two loving arms.

It was he, it was Carlo!

The eight days of agony, the seventy minutes of anxiety, all were forgotten, all submerged in a sea of infinite sweetness.

They said nothing until they were in the carriage, and whilst they drove to their happy home she, kissing him a hundred times, exclaimed:

“Do you know, I love you more than you love me?”

“But why?”

“Because I have written ten times

to you, and you only eight times to me."

"Well, next time I will write twenty times to you."

"No, no. I do not want even one letter. Another time, if you will let me, I will come with you. I will not be away from you; I cannot bear it."

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They were seated at table at the usual hour, calm and happy, with no one but themselves.

They never sat facing each other, but side by side, because even during meal times they felt the necessity of caressing and kissing each other.

Toward the middle of dinner she said, all at once, as if the words had been held back, and were now forced

from her by some internal and invisible spring:

"Do you know that Lieutenant B. came again at five this evening to pay me a visit?"

"Well?"

"It is the third time in one week."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, he always comes at the hours when he knows you are at the office."

"Perhaps he is not free at any other hour."

"Listen, Paolo, you take it too indifferently. I think, however, that in this case you ought to think more of it."

"But what does the lieutenant say to you?"

“As you may believe, he has never failed in respect toward me—but when there are no other visitors he looks at me too persistently, and says the most innocently polite things, but in too warm a tone.”

“Lieutenant B. is my friend, and a perfect gentleman. He has but just come to Modena, and knows nobody. It is only natural that he should pay visits to the wife of his old friend and fellow-student.”

“In short, you are satisfied that he should come here three times a week to see me, stay more than an hour, look at me and tell me I am beautiful.”

“I do not believe he has gone beyond that—anyhow I will beg him to come in the evening, when I also am at home.”

"No, that would be to show some mistrust, which, so far, he has not deserved. I will tell my maid to say, once or twice, that I am out, and then he will change the hour of his visits."

"Do what you think best, dear one, and I will do whatever you desire to calm your fears about this gallant lieutenant. But do you really wish to be more of a royalist than the king, and to disquiet yourself when I am not disquieted?"

"But, Paolo, I am sorry that you are not more concerned. It is not only on account of the lieutenant that I speak, but of all those who at the theatre, at home, and in society think me beautiful, say so, and pay me too much court. In short,

my own Paolo, shall I tell you? I should like to see you a little more jealous of me."

At this point Paolo put down his knife and fork, fell back in his chair, and began to laugh so heartily, so full of merriment, and so loudly that it made her laugh as well.

"A hundred wives complain of the jealousy of their husbands, and I have one who deplores my want of it."

"No, Paolo, do not laugh. This indifference of yours makes me think you do not love me, and that it does not matter to you at all if others pay me too much attention, and that wounds me."

"Dear one, dearest of my treas-

ures, to please you I will become jealous too."

"A little—not too much."

"A little—how much, for example? So? two fingers, three fingers, half a metre?"

"No, do not make fun of me. You know how much I love you; you know you are my very life, that without you I should die. Everything I say to you proceeds from the immense love I bear you. I, you see, am jealous of you."

"But not I of you, for I esteem you too much, and should fear to offend you by any doubts. A woman can always protect herself without the aid of an ally; and when she has a husband whom she loves and esteems he supports her in the course

of attacks, menaces, and gallantry. And together they defend their own honour and felicity."

"Yes, dear, you have every reason in the world . . . but to make me happy, be a little jealous."

"Yes, dear, you shall teach me the way to become so."

And then those two happy creatures interrupted their dinner to throw themselves into each other's arms, and make peace after this trivial battle.

He had loosened her handkerchief and had covered her neck with a whole string of kisses.

"See, Nina, I am jealous of this handkerchief which kisses your shoulders all through the day, and so I take its place. Do you not see, Nina,

that I begin to obey you? I am taking the first lesson in jealousy."

They were both leaning on the sill of a window which looked toward the sea. It was late, and the stars sparkled in a sky which was not yet dark, but no longer blue.

No sound was heard save the murmur of the breeze among the palm leaves and the distant flow of the waves as they kissed the shore.

They did not speak; but the arm of one entwined in that of the other spoke with the hand the words for which the lips were silent.

A perfume of jasmine, pungent and voluptuous, rose from the garden

and intoxicated those two. They were happy.

She interrupted the long silence :

“Dearest, even when you look at the sky and the sea do you not believe in God, in another life?”

He did not answer, but, sighing, pressed her hand still more firmly.

“After all, if you will let me say so, this negation of yours of all that reason cannot understand is nothing but pride pure and simple.”

He was still silent and answered with another pressure of the hand, longer, more tender, and more passionate.

“The ants come into life and die without knowing man or understanding him. Still man exists; and why cannot we be so many ants to another

being more man, more god, more angel than we are?"

And still no answer. His hands only answered with increasing tenderness.

"But speak, my treasure ; say something to me."

Here his obstinately closed lips opened :

"But *Dr. Faust* has already answered them in divine words to the *Margaret* of Goethe."

"They may be divine words, if you will ; but they do not please me at all. *Faust* answers one interrogation with another. He answers like the ancient sybil."

"And in what other way can a man answer the problem, To be, or not to be? A dogmatic answer might be

an offence to reason, and I hate to confess I believe in something I do not understand."

"Pride, pride, always pride; your modern science is entirely leavened with it."

"And your faith with superstition."

"No, my love, I do not wish to force my faith upon you; but believe something, make a faith for yourself, but do not tell me we shall not live even after death."

"Yes, my treasure, I also have my faith. Give me a kiss."

They kissed each other so long and so warmly that their kiss was the loudest sound heard in the deep surrounding stillness.

"See, I believe in your love. I believe in the joy you give me. If

you will, I also believe that our souls at this moment have come to our lips from the very depths of our being and have melted in an ecstasy of love."

"Well, and must these poor souls die with the bodies which inclose them?"

"Ah, who knows?"

"Then you doubt your own doubts?"

"Listen, love ; I am going to make a confession ; but say nothing of it to any living soul, for men would laugh at me. For them supreme wisdom consists in never changing an opinion or turning again to any faith, although nature changes its course every day, and progress itself is but a negation of what has happened yesterday. Before knowing you I believed in nothing, but now the

idea that we could not meet again in heaven is unsupportable, and I hope——”

“My treasure, if you hope you are halfway on the road which leads to faith.”

“And with you and for you who knows but I may gain it some day. To-day leave me halfway on the road.”

* * *

She put her arms round his neck and kissed him anew, and with more length than before.

The kiss, however, this time made no sound, and nothing was heard in the deep surrounding stillness, but the breeze amongst the palm leaves and the ebb and flow of the waves on the shore.

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